

## Musa denies he will meet Sharon

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa denied Saturday that he had requested to meet Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon during his visit to Tel Aviv Sunday, contradicting claims by Israel's foreign ministry. "I never asked to see Sharon. I am not meeting with him," Musa told AFP. An Israeli foreign ministry spokesman said Wednesday that Sharon had "responded positively" to Musa's request for a meeting on the sidelines of an international peace conference in Tel Aviv on Sunday. "I will be there for two hours. If Sharon is at the meeting I will see him but I did not request a meeting," Musa told AFP. The meeting would have been their first since Sharon became foreign minister in October. Musa's last visit to Israel was for the October 1997 inauguration of the Shimon Peres Centre for Peace, which organised Sunday's conference.

# Jordan Times

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## Former Mossad chief joins Labour leader's campaign

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The former head of Israel's Mossad secret service, General Danny Yatom, has joined the election campaign staff of Ehud Barak, head of the opposition Labor party, a campaign official said Saturday. Yatom resigned as head of the service last February after a series of blunders by Mossad agents, including a failed assassination attempt on a Palestinian militant in Jordan in 1997.

## Three Iraqis seeking political asylum in the Philippines

MANILA (AP) — Three Iraqis have sought political asylum in the Philippines but the government has not yet decided whether or not to accept them, Manila newspapers reported Saturday. The reports, quoting Foreign Undersecretary Lauro Baja, said the asylum request was made by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees on behalf of the Iraqis, who were expected to arrive on a ship from Indonesia late Friday. There was no immediate word about them Saturday.

## U.S. deports record number of illegals

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. government said Friday it removed a record number of illegal immigrants from the United States last year, deporting 171,154 foreigners with criminal records or other disqualifying factors. Removals for the fiscal year that ended in September were up 50 per cent from the 1997 record of 114,586, the Immigration and Naturalisation Service said, boasting that the figures were well ahead of the agency's goal of 123,000 deportations. The figures don't include the estimated 1.5 million cases of illegal immigrants apprehended at the U.S. borders last year, most at the Southwest border, and immediately turned back.

## Bail denied for two in alleged forced marriage case

BUFFALO, New York (AP) — Two men accused of trying to smuggle a bound-and-gagged woman across the U.S. border in a rigid car trunk were denied bail Friday as family members disputed her claim of being forced into an arranged marriage. A federal magistrate ruled that Afghan natives Jamal Nasser Aziz, 37, of Toronto, and Wahid Nader, 29, of San Francisco, are a danger to the woman, Mine Betoor, Aziz, Ms. Betoor's uncle, and Nader, her would-be husband, face kidnapping and smuggling charges. Immigration agents discovered Ms. Betoor at the Rainbow Bridge in Niagara Falls on Jan. 1. Authorities said her hands and feet had been bound, a scarf was placed in her mouth.

## Minister fathered son at age of 17

LONDON (R) — Britain's newly appointed Trade Secretary, Stephen Byers, acknowledged he had fathered a son when he was just 17 years old. Byers, 45, issued a statement saying he had never made a secret of the relationship and kept in touch with his 28-year-old son. He also made a plea to the media to leave his son and his son's mother alone. "We are talking about events which took place 28 years ago when both my son's mother and myself were 17 years old," he said. A government spokesman said Byers made the statement following speculation that a newspaper was about to publish details of the relationship.

# Regent-Koumura talks focus on Mideast peace process, Iraq and bilateral relations

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, and Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura on Saturday held talks on the Middle East peace process, Iraq, bilateral relations and Jordan's economic situation and needs.

The Regent and Koumura discussed mechanisms to develop bilateral ties and widen the scope of cooperation in various fields.

In a meeting at the Royal Court late yesterday, the two stressed the need to push forward the peace process to achieve permanent and comprehensive peace that would guarantee the rights of the concerned parties.

Prince Hassan stressed Jordan's commitment to preserve Iraq's territorial integrity and sovereignty and pointed out the need to end the suffering of the Iraqi people, adding that Iraq should once again play its role as an important country in the region.

Calling for the establishment of a regional conflict resolution centre, Prince Hassan highlighted the need for regional mechanisms involving all countries in the region, in order to deal with crises and resolve them peacefully.

At a press conference on Saturday night, Koumura's spokesman described the Japanese minister's talks with the Crown Prince as very fruitful and said both sides commended the "excellent" relationship

between them.

"Jordan made it clear that it is facing many difficulties, deriving mainly from its being right in between the two most troubled areas in the region: Iraq and the Palestinian territories," said Masaki Okada, Koumura's spokesman.

"We understand, and we are ready to alleviate Jordan's difficulties, especially concerning its balance of payments, because of this country's role as a very important stabilising factor in the region," Okada told reporters.

"Those who are cooperative in the peace process, deserve to get some sort of peace dividends," he asserted.

Koumura arrived here yesterday afternoon, on the fourth leg of a week-long Mideast tour which started on Wednesday and has already taken him to Egypt, Lebanon and Syria.

Koumura is scheduled to leave the Kingdom today for the Palestinian self-rule areas and Israel.

Okada said Koumura's mission was aimed at promoting the peace process, by urging Israel to stick to the agreements it signed with the Palestinians, and by urging the Palestinians to "proceed with patience" on the path of peace.

"We will ask Israel to implement U.N. resolutions 242, 338, 245, and all international agreements it signed," he stated.

(Continued on page 12)



HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, accompanies Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura (right) and UNRWA Director Peter Hansen on a visit to the Hitteen refugee camp northeast of Amman on Saturday (Photo by Youssef Al-Akhal)

## Iraq MPs urge scrapping of border with Kuwait

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Dozens of Iraqi MPs on Saturday called for the scrapping of a U.N. resolution demarcating the sanctions-hit state's border with Kuwait, during the opening of an extraordinary two-day session here.

The resolution "is without precedent, unfair and arbitrary... [it] is not a prerogative of the Security Council, but should be solved bilaterally or by arbitration," said MP Ibrahim Yussef Turki Jaddua.

"The Security Council imposed this decision on the basis of a British map never recognised by Iraq," Iraq was amputated of territory and oil

fields. Why must Iraq continue to accept this unjust situation?" he said.

Iraq has on several occasions recognised the border, covered by U.N. Resolution 833 adopted in May 1993, most of which is monitored by the U.N. Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission.

"When we accepted this arbitrary resolution we thought it would lead to a lifting of the embargo after a reasonable period," the head of the parliamentary committee on Arab and international affairs, Khaled Shihab Al

Duri, told AFP after the session.

Crippling U.N. sanctions were imposed on Iraq following its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Iraqi forces were pushed out of the emirate by a U.S.-led multinational coalition in the 1991 Gulf War.

During the session other MPs called for an end to disarmament operations in Iraq. The U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) for Iraqi disarmament stopped its operations prior to the four-day U.S. and British missile attacks that ended Dec. 30.

(Continued on page 12)

## Butler admits inspectors used U.S. monitoring equipment

CAIRO (Agencies) — Top U.N. arms inspector Richard Butler admitted in an interview published Saturday that UNSCOM used U.S. equipment to eavesdrop on Iraqi military officials.

"We certainly tried to monitor the communications concerning inspections — namely telecommunications that gave instructions to hide what we were looking for," Butler said, quoted in the Arabic language Al Hayat newspaper.

"But I never authorised eavesdropping to monitor the travel of President Saddam Hussein," said Butler, according to a translation of the Arabic text of his remarks in the London-based paper.

information-gathering on Iraq by U.N. arms inspectors.

According to Al Hayat, the September 1996 memorandum quotes Ekeus "complaining that eight months after the start of the eavesdropping, the U.S. intelligence services are refusing to provide UNSCOM information."

Butler said that when "I took my job they asked me if I wanted to use this technology" of eavesdropping. "I thought about it for a long time and I examined the nature of this technology, its limits and its objectives, and I decided that it was legal for UNSCOM to use it as long as Iraq tried to fool us and hide the truth," he said.

But he stressed that he had set "strict rules to ensure that UNSCOM's job was not used for other objectives."

Asked if he felt he had been fooled by the Americans, Butler said: "I cannot use that word now as long as the whole

truth is not known."

On Friday Butler sought clarifications from U.S. authorities about allegations that Washington used U.N. eavesdropping operations in Iraq to undermine the Iraqi president.

Butler said he was particularly concerned by a U.S. State Department spokesman's comment on Jan. 7 that "American support [to UNSCOM] was specifically tailored to facilitate UNSCOM's mission, and for no other purpose and was done at the direct request of the U.N. Special Commission."

The Washington Post reported Friday that the U.S. last March "took control" of the operation involving sophisticated monitoring devices in Iraq which had been used by the U.N. weapons inspectors.

(Continued on page 3)

## Blair warns Iraq response will be 'swift, immediate'

ALI AL SALEM AIRBASE (AFP) — British Prime Minister Tony Blair warned Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on Saturday that a military response will be "swift and immediate" if he continues to pose a threat to the region.

"What Saddam has to realise is that we are not going to allow him to threaten his neighbours or threaten the stability of the region without taking action," Blair told British Royal Air Force personnel based here.

"And if there is any question of reprisals being taken against allied forces or their friends, then our response will be swift and immediate in the region," the premier said, speaking under the

wing of a British Tomado warplane.

His warning came during a one-day visit to Kuwait that included top-level talks on Iraq in the face of heightened tension over "no-fly" zones in the sanctions-hit state.

Blair, en route from South Africa, met Emir Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, the crown prince, defence minister and foreign minister at the Bayan Palace in Kuwait City, officials said.

The prime minister later met some 500 British soldiers and Royal Air Force personnel stationed at this airbase 80 kilometres north of the capital.

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## Tutu: Israel and Palestinians can achieve reconciliation

TEL AVIV (AP) — South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu said Saturday that Israel and the Palestinians can achieve reconciliation if their leaders are prepared to take risks. Tutu, who received the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize for his 30-year struggle against the apartheid regime in his South Africa, was speaking at the Yakar Institute for Social Concern. He told the gathering that many people had said the regime of discrimination against non-whites could not be overturned without a blood-bath, yet the peoples of South Africa had done it, and achieved reconciliation. "So if it could happen to us it can happen anywhere," he said. "Can anyone tell me why it cannot happen here?" However this could only be achieved if leaders on both sides are prepared to take risks, he said, to face the truth and to say they are sorry.

## Jordan says Israel's refusal to return Arab lands spells disaster

AMMAN (AFP) — Jordan said Saturday that security and peace will not come to the Middle East until Israel returns Arab east Jerusalem and the Golan Heights which it occupied in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

Reacting to an Israeli parliamentary move to make it more difficult to give back the territories, Jordan's Royal Commission for Jerusalem Affairs said the "dangerous" move "threatens the peace process with failure."

"Peace demands the return of the Golan Heights to Syria, of south Lebanon to Lebanon and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital," said Abdullah Kanaan, secretary general of the commission, which is headed by HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent.

"Anything else and the region will move inexorably toward a series of disasters the size of which God alone knows," Kanaan said in a statement received by AFP.

The Israeli parliament voted 55 to 35 with 18

abstentions Monday to approve a bill requiring that any territorial concessions on the Golan or Arab east Jerusalem be approved by at least 61 members of parliament as well as in a national referendum.

The bill must pass two more readings before it becomes law.

Kanaan condemned the bill, suggesting it was being used as a political pawn in the run up to Israeli general elections expected in May.

"The time has come for Israel — if it wants to live in peace and security — to stop turning back the clock and put an end to the exploitation of occupied Arab land in domestic squabbles."

Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994 in which the Jewish state agreed to "respect the present special role" of Jordan with regard to the Muslim holy shrines in Jerusalem.

Arab east Jerusalem, on the edge of the West Bank, formed part of Jordanian territory from 1950 until Israel's occupation in June 1967.

## PNA calls for pressure on Israel

RAMALLAH (AFP) — The Palestinian cabinet Saturday called on the international community to put pressure on Israel to force it to respect the U.S.-brokered Wye River accord in the run-up to May's elections.

In a statement issued after its weekly meeting the cabinet expressed fears that Israel was using the pretext of elections to freeze the land-for-security agreement.

It attacked Jewish settlement activity as a violation of the accord, which barred both sides from actions that could change the status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Israeli government announced on Sunday it had received tenders for the construction of a Jewish settlement in Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab east Jerusalem, and on the same day Israeli television revealed work had started on another settlement near Ramallah.

The United States has shown its displeasure over Israeli actions, with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright refusing to meet Foreign Minister Ariel

Sharon during his recent visit to New York.

Albright also cancelled an expected visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories to monitor implementation of the Wye agreement. Israel's foreign ministry Tuesday outlined what it called numerous Palestinian violations of the accord in a bid to deflect international criticism of its decision to freeze implementation.

In a memo intended for use by Israeli diplomats but released to the press, the ministry set out a series of conditions it said the Palestinians must meet before Israel will hand over any further territory as called for in the agreement.

Israel is demanding in particular that the Palestinians give up their plan to proclaim a state unilaterally on May 4, when the five years of autonomy agreed under the Oslo accords come to an end.

The Wye River agreement called for three Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank, spread out over three months. Only the first has been carried out. The second fell due in December.

## Another Briton kidnapped in Yemen

LONDON (AFP) — A British oil worker was abducted Saturday in Yemen, Britain's Foreign Office said, as hundreds of supporters of five Britons held there on suspicion of terrorism demonstrated for their release.

The latest kidnapping came less than two weeks after four hostages were killed in a shootout following an earlier abduction of westerners.

A Foreign Office spokesman named the Briton as John Brooke, aged 46, from Norwich, eastern England, who was kidnapped at 1320 GMT Saturday from a compound near Marib east of the capital Sanaa.

On Dec. 28, 16 western tourists were abducted in southern Yemen. Three Britons and an Australian died

in a subsequent rescue bid by Yemeni security forces.

The spokesman said Britain's ambassador had been assured by Prime Minister Abd Al Karim Iryani that "no force would be used to try to effect a rescue."

"The British ambassador has already spoken with the Yemeni prime minister, the deputy foreign minister and the minister of the interior and has arranged an early morning meeting tomorrow [Sunday] with the minister of the interior to discuss the situation."

Brooke's wife Katherine said the kidnappers had cut a hole in the compound fence before taking her husband.

"He has always had protection, always had an armed guard. Obviously he didn't put up any resistance when they

broke in, there was no point as they can bargain with him. Hopefully that will happen."

She said her husband had worked in Yemen for 12 years, and was involved in the final stages of drilling for oil for U.S. company Halliburton.

"I rang John about a week ago because he was worried but he couldn't speak on the telephone," she said. He was due to return home next Thursday.

The Foreign Office had not yet made any contact with the kidnappers, she added.

The kidnapping came as several hundred supporters of five Britons detained in Yemen on suspicion of terrorist activity demonstrated for their release.

It is understood the five are being questioned about plots

to bomb targets in Aden and possible links to the December hostage-takers.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said he had rung the Yemeni premier asking for the detainees to be treated fairly and swiftly.

"If those detained are to be charged they should be charged soon," he said. "They must be given every opportunity to defend themselves."

The Foreign Office said it had found nothing to support allegations that they had been maltreated.

Consul General David Pearce visited Ghulam Hussein, 25, Shahid Butt, 33, and Samad Ahmad, 21, in the Yemeni capital Aden and found them all to be in good health, a Foreign Office spokeswoman said.



# Mubarak accuses Saddam of seeking new U.S.-British strikes

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak accused his Iraqi counterpart Saddam Hussein on Saturday of deliberately seeking fresh British and U.S. air and missile strikes.

"Saddam is inciting the United States and Britain to strike his country because he is not at all concerned about the plight of the Iraqi people," Mubarak told the government newspaper Al Gumburiya.

"Saddam Hussein has caught an illness called the Arab street. He imagines that demonstrators have taken to the streets around the Arab

World in support of him and fails to realise that they are actually showing their sympathy for the suffering of their Iraqi brothers," he told the paper.

Mubarak charged that Saddam was so unconcerned about his people's plight that he refused offers of humanitarian aid from Egypt and other Arab governments following four days of U.S. and British missile strikes that ended Dec. 20.

The Egyptian president's comments were the latest salvo in a mounting war of words with Baghdad which

erupted late last month when he blamed Saddam for the Iraqi people's suffering.

The influential Baghdad daily Babel appealed for a ceasefire on Monday but Cairo's government-owned press rebuffed the offer and instead called for the first time for Saddam's ouster.

The government weekly Akhbar Al Yom joined the attack Saturday, with both Saddam and Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz in its sights.

It carried a front-page cartoon showing Saddam standing over a pile of bodies with

a smoking gun, and Aziz saying: "I'm sure Your Excellency is tired of killing manually. I suggest we build an electric abattoir to kill people in alphabetical order."

The weekly also carried an anti-Saddam editorial and four pages of articles with headlines such as: "Will Saddam Hussein face an international criminal tribunal?" "Why Tariq Aziz hates Egypt and President Mubarak." "Saddam on the international list of war criminals." and "The Egyptian people cry out against the butcher of Baghdad."



KUWAITI APPOINTED CHURCH LEADER: Kuwaiti Emmanuel Benjamin Gharib prays while his wife and children stand in front of church pews behind him just before an emotional ceremony to appoint him Reverend and Pastor of the Anglican Church of Kuwait. Many non-Christians came to attend the ceremony, the first of its kind in the conservative Gulf Arab region (Reuters photo)

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Kurdish rivals try to work out deal

ANKARA (R) — Leaders of two rival Iraqi Kurdish groups who control northern Iraq in opposition to Baghdad were trying to flesh out a four-month-old peace deal on the second day of their talks on Saturday, one of the groups said. "It is imperative that the two leaders work to forge a common blueprint for the accord's implementation," Barham Saleh of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), said in a statement. PUK chief Jalal Talabani met former enemy Massoud Barzani of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in Barzani's hilltop stronghold of Salahuddin on Friday, the first meeting between the two leaders inside the mountainous enclave for four years.

### Warning on Sudan's multi-party system

KHARTOUM (AFP) — A multi-party system will not work in Sudan without the participation of Umma and the Democratic Unionist Party, two major political formations, a politician who has applied to set up his own party has warned. Siddeek Sidahmad Khalil, who this week applied for registration of what he called the International People's Friendship party, told Saturday's Al Usbu daily that new legislation allowing political associations was "a rope entwined around democracy." The system "will never succeed without participation by the two major parties," he said. Apart from the National Islamic Front (NIF), which was the basis of the now ruling National Congress, all the main outlawed parties — Umma, the DUP and the Communist Party — have rejected the law and constitutional changes underlying it.

### Egyptian revolutionary dies

CAIRO (AP) — Abdul Latif Al Baghdadi, a leading member of the Free Officers movement that ousted the Egyptian monarchy, has died at 81. Egypt's Middle East News Agency reported Saturday. Al Baghdadi was taken to hospital Friday for complications from his two-year struggle with liver cancer, said MENA. He died Friday night. He was one of the closest supporters of the late President Gamal Abdul Nasser, who organized the movement that toppled King Farouk in what became known as Egypt's 1952 revolution. He held a number of top offices under Nasser.

### Radioactive metal contaminates Turks

ISTANBUL (AP) — Atomic Energy officials have said two Turkish scrap dealers were contaminated by radiation while breaking up a two-tonne block of iron and lead, reports said Saturday. The two brothers were hospitalised on Friday, weeks after they developed severe burns on their hands and started vomiting. Yasar Ozalp, an Atomic Energy official, said a month ago the two were exposed to cobalt-60, a radioactive form of the metal and a component of industrial equipment used to check the strength of welds and pipes, daily Hurriyet reported. Eight other workers were also submitted to medical tests but later released from hospital, private NTV television said. NTV said the brothers were in serious condition. The level of exposure was not clear.

## Members of U.S. doomsday cult deported from Israel

TORONTO (AP) — Members of an American doomsday cult suspected of plotting attacks in Jerusalem to hasten the return of Jesus Christ were expelled from Israel early Saturday.

Israeli police said security agents were accompanying the 14 cultists, including six children, on the flight, which landed in Toronto Saturday morning. The cult members were taken to a waiting area away from reporters before their connecting flight to Denver.

Earlier, as they were shuttled in unmarked police vehicles into Ben Gurion airport in Lod, a suburb of Tel Aviv, two of the cult members covered their heads with coats when they spotted TV cameras. One bearded man looked straight ahead, his face grim.

None responded to questions shouted by reporters.

There is growing concern in Israel that the Denver-based group, the Concerned Christians, could be a forerunner of hundreds of fanatics who will be drawn to Israel at the close of the millennium for what they expect to be the second coming of Christ.

Experts say such extremists could turn violent if their hopes are not met, and some predict mass suicides at holy sites.

Israel has created a police task force to cope with the problem.

The Concerned Christians arrived in Israel in September, settled in two homes in the wooded Jerusalem suburbs of Mevaseret Zion and Moza and were eventually placed under police surveillance.

The homes were raided earlier this week and the 14 were detained. Three cult members were questioned by police about alleged plots to carry out violence at holy sites in Jerusalem in an attempt to hasten the return of Jesus.

The cult members denied wrongdoing and no charges were filed, but they were ordered deported.

On Friday, at Jerusalem's Al Aqsa Mosque, prayer leader Hayan Al Idrisi referred to the cult in his sermon to more than 250,000 worshippers: "We think this is a dangerous group," he said.

According to one scenario cited by millennium researchers, Christian extremists might try to damage Al Aqsa, Islam's third holiest shrine, to pave the way for rebuilding the Jewish Temple — considered by some Christians a necessary step before the return of Christ.

Al Idrisi claimed the cultists plotted to destroy Al Aqsa.

## Ramadan death toll mounts in Algeria

ALGIERS (AFP) — Two members of Algeria's security forces were the latest victims of the bloodshed marking the Muslim Holy Month of Ramadan in Algeria, the daily Demain l'Algerie reported on Saturday.

A soldier and a local guard were gunned down in an ambush by suspected Islamists at Boudiane, near Jijel, 300 kilometres east of the capital on Thursday, the paper reported.

An Islamist was killed on Wednesday by security forces at Ain Turk near the

western port city of Oran. The daily l'Authentique reported.

More than 90 people have now been killed by the Islamists since Ramadan began on Dec. 19. During Ramadan last year 1,200 people were slaughtered in violence

blamed on the Islamists. Tens of thousands of people have died, most of them civilians, in a spiral of violence triggered when the military regime cancelled elections that the now banned Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win in early 1992.

## Kissinger on visit to Israel, PNA areas

TEL AVIV (AP) — Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, one of the early architects of the Israel-Arab peace process, arrived Saturday for a visit to Israel and the Palestinian lands and planned to meet with leaders on both sides.

Kissinger and other dignitaries were attending a weekend conference at the Peres Centre for Peace, founded by former Prime Minister Shimon Peres. Peres was on hand to greet the former secretary of state.

During his visit, Kissinger was also to meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

"I feel at home. We've shared many experiences here. I'm among friends," Kissinger told reporters.

He refused to answer questions about the current Israeli election campaign, saying he didn't want to get into "internal debate."

"I believe that every Israeli leader wants peace," he said.

Kissinger was a national security adviser in the administration of President Richard Nixon when the United States mounted an airlift to resupply Israel's hard-pressed forces in the early days of the 1973 Mideast war.

Later Kissinger helped broker successful negotiations between Israel and Egypt and between Israel and Syria on disengage-

ment of forces in Sinai and the Golan Heights. Israel and Egypt signed a peace treaty in 1979.

After a half-hour private talk with Peres, Kissinger left to call on Leah Rabin, widow of assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Kissinger had a long personal friendship with the slain leader that dated back to the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Rabin was Israel's ambassador to the United States.

## Qataris kick off campaign for historic municipal elections

DOHA (AP) — Candidates for Qatar's first municipal elections set in March kicked off their election campaigns Saturday.

A dozen candidates took out advertisements in the country's major newspapers spelling out their goals and plans if they're elected to the 29-member Municipal Council.

Qatari ruler Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani has said the March 8 elections would be the

first step to an elected legislature early in the next century. Qatar now has an advisory council appointed by the emir, but it lacks legislative powers.

Even the new municipal council will be an advisory body, and its decisions will be non-binding. The names of the final 248 candidates, of whom five are women, were announced Thursday.

The most prominent candidates

are former Justice Minister Najib Al Nuemi, former head of the Qatar News Agency Saeed Al Kuwari, and the secretary general of the country's consultative council, Abdul Rahman Al Jufri.

Moza Al Malki, a columnist and professor of psychology at Qatar's University for Women, and Wadha Al Suwaidi, head of the university's teaching college, are among the female candidates.

For the municipal elections, Qatar has been divided into 29 districts, and one member will be elected to the council from each district.

Among states in the conservative Gulf, only Kuwait has an elected parliament, though women there are not eligible to vote or run for office.

In Qatar, both men and women will be allowed to vote and to run

for a council seat.

Still, only about 20,000 of Qatar's 150,000 citizens will be eligible to cast ballots. The law excludes Qataris who are members of the army and police forces and those who have been citizens for less than 15 years.

Qatar's total population is about 600,000, including some 450,000 foreigners, most of them labourers from the Indian subcontinent.

## JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

## PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 ...Cartoon — The Pink Panther  
15:20 ...The Pumpkin Patch  
15:30 ...Lift Off  
16:00 ...Doc — Big Cat Diary  
16:30 ...Ch. 2 Links with Ch. 1  
17:00 ...Le Grand Secret  
18:15 ...Omar Ben Abdul Aziz  
19:00 ...Le Journal  
19:15 ...Words of Wisdom  
19:30 ...News Headlines  
19:35 ...Comedy — The Britus Empire  
20:00 Journey Across the Land of Islam  
20:30 Drama — Walker, Texas Ranger  
21:15 ...Doc — Faring & Ecology  
21:30 Entertainment — Behind the Scenes  
22:00 ...News in English  
22:30 ...Split Decisions  
23:10 Drama — Doggie Houser  
23:59 ...End of T.X.

## PRAYER TIMES

04:56 ...Fajr  
05:11 ...Sunrise/Duha  
11:43 ...Dhuhr  
14:30 ...Asr  
16:54 ...Maghreb  
18:15 ...Isha

## CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church  
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740  
Assemblies of God Church Tel.

4632785  
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590  
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366  
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811  
St. Atram Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751  
Amman International Church Tel. 5865897  
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404  
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295  
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932  
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757  
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440  
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138  
Church of Presentation, Sweifeh Tel. 5920146  
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757  
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190  
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679  
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052  
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771531  
The American Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology  
Temperatures are expected to rise slightly, skies partly cloudy, and winds westerly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Amman ..... 06/15  
Aqaba ..... 12/20  
Deserts ..... 03/17  
Jordan Valley ..... 10/21

Yesterday's high temperatures:  
Amman 13, Aqaba 18 Humidity readings: Amman 60 per cent, Aqaba 67 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun ..... 04/12  
Jerash ..... 05/16  
Um Qays ..... 05/16  
Madaba ..... 05/15  
Petra ..... 05/15  
Dead Sea ..... 13/23

AMMAN:  
Dr. Farouq Noure ..... 5601719  
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyar ..... 4630115  
Dr. Wisam Hazzayn ..... 4748363

AMMAN:  
Dr. Farouq Noure ..... 5601719  
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Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyar ..... 4630115  
Dr. Wisam Hazzayn ..... 4748363

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09:35 ..... Frankfurt (RJ)  
10:50 ..... Aqaba, Vienna (RJ)  
11:00 ..... Rome (RJ)  
11:25 ..... Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)  
11:30 ..... Amsterdam, New York (RJ)  
12:15 ..... Athens (RJ)  
12:15 ..... London (RJ)  
20:30 ..... Jeddah (RJ)  
20:35 ..... New Delhi (RJ)  
20:45 ..... Damascus (RJ)  
21:00 ..... Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)  
21:10 ..... Cairo (RJ)  
22:45 ..... Samara (RJ)  
00:10 ..... Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)  
00:15 ..... Bangkok (RJ)

Other Flights  
12:30 ..... Aden (FY)  
14:35 ..... Istanbul (TK)  
18:00 ..... Dubai, Damascus (EK)  
18:40 ..... Beirut (6E)  
18:45 ..... Kiev (6E)  
19:05 ..... Paris (AF)  
20:25 ..... Tel Aviv (LY)  
20:40 ..... Cairo (MS)  
22:25 ..... London, Damascus (BA)  
23:35 ..... Amsterdam (KL)  
23:55 ..... Larnaca (CY)  
00:55 ..... Bucharest (RO)  
02:00 ..... Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights  
09:30 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)  
11:10 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)  
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)  
18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)  
22:50 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights  
08:25 ..... Bombay (RJ)  
08:35 ..... Jeddah (RJ)  
08:50 ..... Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)

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## King to return to Jordan after 'Eid Al Fitr, prime minister tells Parliament

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein's return to Jordan has started with his arrival in London, where he will undergo a period of recuperation before coming back to Amman, Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh told Parliament on Saturday.

"King Hussein told me by phone that the trip back home has begun, but he did not give a specific date for his return, saying only that he will come back after the 'Eid Al Fitr' holiday, when his recuperation period will have ended," the prime minister said.

HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, who paid a visit to London on Friday, reassured the Jordanian people that "the King is well, his morale is high as usual, and he sends all

his love to his whole Jordanian family."

Tarawneh said that during the meeting, the King and the Crown Prince reviewed issues in the Middle East that have a direct impact on the Kingdom and means of dealing with the events.

"Soon after Prince Hassan left London, the King called me to express his delight over the visit, praising Prince Hassan's distinguished performance as Regent in the difficult period witnessed by the region recently. He also gave directives to the government about a number of issues," said Tarawneh.

"Following his return, Prince Hassan described his visit to the King as one of the best in his whole life, noting that he was

personally reassured about the King's health condition as he was completely cured," according to Tarawneh.

The Crown Prince intended it to be a surprise visit, but as soon as the King learned of it, and as a sign of improved health, King Hussein flew his helicopter from his residence in London to welcome his brother at the airport.

For his part, the speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, Abdul Hadi Majali, said the Jordanian people and their representatives in the House are overwhelmed with joy over the reassurances given them by Prince Hassan about King Hussein's recovery and his imminent return to Jordan.

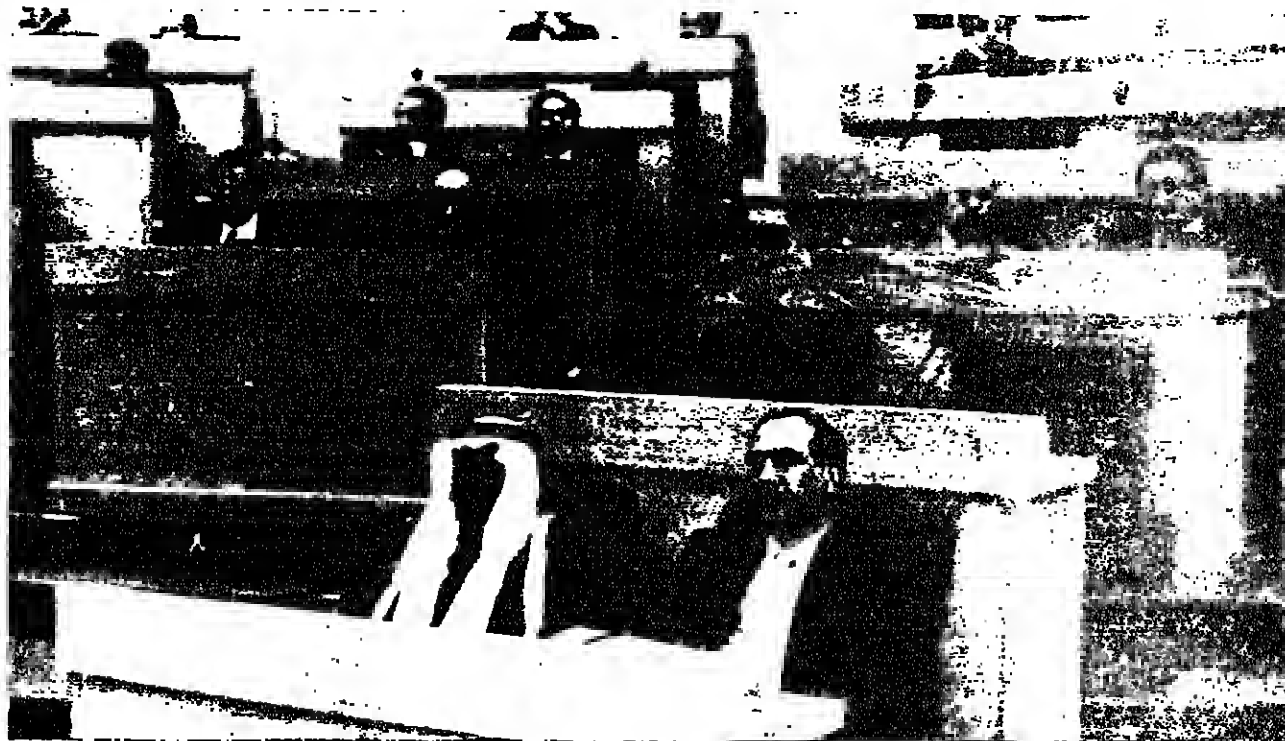
## Lower House begins debate on government's proposed 1999 budget

### Deputies focus on economic reform programme, unemployment

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Lower House of Parliament on Saturday began debating the government's proposed JD2,160 million budget for 1999 and the recommendations included in a report submitted by the House's Finance Committee last week.

A total of 66 deputies requested the opportunity to address the House during the debate, which is expected to last four days. Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh and the Cabinet are attending the proceedings.

The deputies, who held morning and evening sessions, discussed topics ranging from the IMF-sponsored economic restructuring programme and economic reforms to questions related to poverty and unemployment.



Deputies listen to a speaker during the opening session of the Lower House's debate on the government's proposed budget for 1999 (Petra photo)

The first deputy to address the session was Mahmoud Kharabshah, who attacked the 10-year economic restructuring programme agreed upon with the International Monetary Fund, saying that it has failed to solve any of Jordan's economic difficulties.

Kharabshah urged the government, which he said has decided to embark on a new three-year restructuring programme after the current agreement ends in February, to present Parliament with the true situation about the economy, the country's debt and poverty.

The deputy said the government should develop a national strategy to deal with poverty and stop what he described as the infiltration of Israeli firms into Jordan.

Deputy Rida Haddad demanded that the government extend assistance to

farmers and said Jordanian farmers should be granted interest-free loans and help in marketing their products abroad.

Deputy Mohammad Dweib tackled the question of non-Jordanians employed in the Kingdom. He demanded that the government take prompt action to stem the influx of guest workers, the number of whom has been estimated by the government at one million.

Dweib added that these workers are draining Jordan of its hard currency reserves through the remittances they send to their home countries while at the same time aggravating the unemployment situation.

Deputy Abdullah Jazi

urged the government to raise the salaries of civil servants and military personnel.

Jazi demanded that the government subsidise animal fodder and adopt a comprehensive plan to attract investment in livestock farming, well drilling and veterinary services.

Deputy Raji Haddad urged the government to take appropriate measures to end profiteering and the skyrocketing cost of living.

Haddad also urged the government to increase the funds available to needy persons eligible for the government-sponsored social safety package and to finance small income-generating projects.

Deputy Riyad Sarraf criticised the government for

continuing to provide subsidies or financial assistance to firms facing financial hardships.

Sarraf asked that the government come up with a plan to help livestock breeders, whom he said will be facing serious difficulties in view of the lack of rainfall and the rising prices of animal feed.

Deputy Anjad Majali said unemployment and poverty can only be dealt with under a comprehensive reform programme. This programme, he added, should include a re-examination of the educational system and should introduce wide-ranging vocational training programmes to enable Jordanians to take the place of guest workers.

Majali also urged the government to do whatever is needed to remove obstacles blocking Jordanian exports to the Palestinian territories and to help lift the sanctions on Iraq, one of the Kingdom's most important markets.

Deputy Mohammad Bani Hani criticised the government's economic performance, saying that poverty and unemployment could be addressed by launching income-generating projects and ensuring that competent persons are appointed to appropriate positions.

Bani Hani said the government should encourage foreign investment and expand trade with neighbouring countries.

## JTC announces changes to telephone numbers

New numbers in Zarqa, Irbid, Madaba, Balqa

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Telecommunications Company Saturday announced that on midnight Jan. 31 it will change the area calling code of the Zarqa and Madaba governorates and increase the number of digits in Irbid and Balqa governorate phone numbers to seven from six.

In the Zarqa governorate, the area calling code will be changed to 05 from 09. Within Zarqa city limits, the number 3 will be added to the

beginning of all phone numbers, while the sequence 382 will replace the current 91 at the beginning of phone numbers in Zarqa governorate's free zone and Duleil area.

In the Madaba governorate, the area calling code will be changed to 05 from 08. In the city's Tibban suburb, 32 will replace with 5 at the beginning of all numbers. Telephone numbers in the Irbid governorate will be changed as follows:

6560 will replace 236 at the beginning of numbers within Irbid city limits. 6570 will replace 291 in the Wadi Rayyan area. 6550 will replace 292 in Al Mashare and Waqqas. 6554 will replace with 237 in Al Manshira. 6587 will replace 238 in North-Shounah. 705 will replace 22 in Al Nueimeh, and 73 will replace 2 in Ramtha.

In Balqa governorate, 3 will be added to the beginning of phone numbers Salt city limits.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Prince Firas visits statistics department

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Prince Firas, His Majesty King Hussein's advisor for health affairs, Saturday inspected the General Statistics Department and discussed its geographic information system and activities with Director Hussein Shakharch.

#### Castro receives CSS director

AMMAN (Petra) — Cuban President Fidel Castro received the director of the University of Jordan's Centre for Strategic Studies, Mustafa Hamaneh, who was invited by the Cuban government to participate in celebrations marking the 40th anniversary of the Cuban revolution. During the encounter, Hamaneh congratulated Castro and wished progress and prosperity to the Cuban people. During the trip, Hamaneh visited several independent and Communist Party research centres and presented a lecture on the Middle East peace process at CEAMO. Latin America's leading research centre on Africa and the Middle East. Hamaneh also held several roundtable discussions on issues related to transitions in Third World societies and processes of political and economic development.

#### Jordan to attend Omani festival

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan will participate in the Muscat Festival for Arts and Popular Crafts, which will be held in the Omani capital Feb. 27-March 19 under the supervision of Omani's Royal Court. The Ministry of Tourism, the Jordan Tourism Board and other societies involved in crafts manufacturing will take part in the event. The ministry's secretary general, Alia Bouran, Saturday led a meeting to review the Kingdom's preparations for the event.

#### FM received EC envoy's credentials

AMMAN (Petra) — Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib on Saturday received the credentials of the new head of the European Commission in Jordan, James Moran.

### what's going on

#### HONOUR CRIMES

\* Special CNN programme on honour crimes in Jordan on Monday Jan. 11 at 11:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. (local time).

#### FILM

\* "Le Bossu" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, on Monday Jan. 11 at 8:30 p.m.

#### POETRY RECITAL

\* Poetry recital with the participation of several poets at the City Hall, Greater Amman Municipality, Ras Al 'Ain at 7:30 p.m.

#### LECTURE

\* "The Nymphs" by Ms. Chan Tray at the Friends of Archaeology on Monday Jan. 11 at 7:30 p.m. (Telefax 5930682). (The lecture will discuss whether the Roman Nymphs were due to the existence of the water channels or was it just a gymnasium for the elite).

#### EXHIBITIONS

\* Exhibition of ceramics, sculpture, and abstract (plastic) art by Jordanian, Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese, and Sudanese artists at Hammourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until Jan. 25.  
\* Exhibition of Nabataean silver jewellery at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre, off Wadi Sagra Street, until Jan. 15 (Tel. 5699141/2).  
\* "The Warm Winter" — works by several artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Uthmaniyah (Tel. 5526932), until Feb. 1.  
\* The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until Jan. 28.

## Ongoing relief campaign seeks to help needy during Ramadan

By Suha Ma'ayeh

**TALIBIEH CAMP** — An 80-year-old woman managed to make her way through a crowd in the poverty-stricken Talibieh refugee camp to obtain one of the yellow sachets piled up in a truck distributing aid rations.

"I want a sachet," pleaded the frail woman, whose ageing face was filled with lines etched by worry and misery.

Her call was heeded by a volunteer distributing rations of badly-needed sugar, rice and lentils under a Ramadan charity campaign organised by Her Royal Highness Princess Basma.

"By God, I swear we have nothing to eat," she cried.

The nearly 500 other men, women and children who gathered around the relief truck in the Palestinian refugee camp, a few kilometres away from the Queen Alia International Airport, echoed similar needs.

Ironically, on a hill a few kilometres away lies an affluent country club, a cool oasis of modern furniture and state-of-the-art sports facilities that only a tiny number of Jordanians can afford.

The government is under orders from His Majesty King Hussein to fight unemployment and poverty in a country where the gap between the rich and poor is widening amid an economic recession brought about by a host of local and regional factors.

"God knows how we survive from day to day," said another woman in her mid-30s as she carried her infant in her arms next to the aid truck.

"There are days when I beg my neighbours for bread... sometimes we

do not eat at all," said another woman, whose husband, a service driver, earns JD120 a month. Her mother-in-law lives with them under an extended family system that remains common in Jordan.

"We do not have enough money to buy gasoline, soap, sugar," she said, tears streaming down her eyes.

Princess Basma supervised the aid distribution under a continued campaign that has taken her to scores of impoverished villages and towns since the start of the fasting month of Ramadan, which began this year on Dec. 19.

The annual campaign is organised by the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF) during Ramadan to comfort Jordan's poor and unemployed.

Princess Basma, president of the QAF, started the campaign in 1991 to reflect the spirit of Ramadan, when Muslims are encouraged to engage in philanthropic acts.

As beneficiaries in Talibieh Camp queued up to receive sachets, representatives of local residents gathered around the Princess at a school campus and aired their grievances — common issues heard across Jordan, whose economy has never really recovered from the devastating effects of the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis.

They complained of a shortage in medical services and asked that the government cover them under a health insurance scheme that benefits military personnel and civil servants and their families.

Other residents complained of intolerable smells from the camp's open sewers and mosquitoes haunting their lives.

Over 30 per cent of the country's 4.2 million people live below the poverty line, according to official figures.

Unemployment, officially estimated at 15 per cent and independently at 27 per cent, is another major concern for most citizens, along with declining living standards, soaring foreign debt and a severe water crisis.

Most alarming, poverty, and its by-products of illiteracy and school dropouts, is on the rise.

Princess Basma has appealed for years to all institutions and individuals in the country and abroad to donate what they feel is the right amount of zakat (Muslim almsgiving) or in-kind donations to help the campaign and to enable the QAF to implement sustainable development projects in underprivileged areas in Jordan.

The Princess has said she believes that any help that can be sustainable has more far-reaching results than one-time handouts.

Over the past eight years, income-generating projects launched by QAF during the month of Ramadan have benefited 961 families living in the huda and in other rural and poor areas of the country.

They focus on fruit and vegetable processing and preservation, dairy products, animal husbandry and medicinal and herbal plant projects.

The campaign also provides medicine and expensive medical equipment needed by hospitals in remote areas in addition to wheelchairs and other items.

It also helps needy people by covering the cost of surgery and granting scholarships and assistantships to university and school students as well as clothing and food.

## Butler admits inspectors used U.S. equipment

(Continued from page 1)

The paper said that "information relevant to the work of the U.N. force, which was searching for Iraq's prohibited weapons or the means to conceal them, was shared with UNSCOM's chairman and his deputy," U.S. national Charles Duelfer.

Other information, including material that might be helpful to the United States in destabilis-

ing Saddam Hussein, was retained by Washington," the paper said, quoting unidentified U.S. officials.

Butler denied the charges, saying: "At no point have I given authorisation to place any part of UNSCOM's operations under the control of the United States or any other supporting government."

**UNSCOM staff reduced to 12 persons in Bahrain**

Meanwhile in Manama, a UNSCOM official said his commission has sent home almost all its staff after they were evacuated to Bahrain before U.S.-British airstrikes on Iraq.

"Only 12 UNSCOM staffers remain here after their successive reduction," said Goran Wallen, chief of the commission's field office in Bahrain.

UNSCOM evacuated more than 100 staffers from Baghdad in mid-

December to their base in this tiny Gulf island state and has been sending them to their home countries because of a lack of work.

Wallen would not say which staff members remain in Bahrain, but said they make up a "balanced composition" to perform UNSCOM's duties. One who has left is the commission's spokeswoman, Caroline Cross.

## National strategy for combating drugs to be presented March 8

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government Saturday announced that it will hold a national conference on March 8 to present a national strategy to combat drug use and trafficking in the country.

Minister of Social Development Mohammad Khair Mamsar said the conference, which will be held at King Abdullah Mosque under Royal patronage, will review recent national efforts to fight narcotics through prevention and rehabilitation and will discuss the effects of drug use on society.

During a preparatory meeting, Mamsar stressed the importance of strengthening coordination between public, private and voluntary groups to find a proper solution to the problem.

Last November, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs said the government, in conjunction with voluntary organisations, was discussing a proposed \$6 million scheme to combat drug abuse.

The ministry added that the draft plan for the proposed three-year phased project was awaiting the Higher Anti-Narcotics Committee's approval.

The draft scheme includes measures to limit the supply and demand for drugs and provide treatment and rehabilitation services to substance abusers.

It also provides for training anti-drug groups and cooperating with local and international organisations regarding the issue.

In addition to the Anti-Narcotics and Customs Departments, the health, awqaf, justice, social development, education, information, youth and five other ministries would be involved in the plan as well as three voluntary

organisations, several local universities and regional anti-drug bodies.

In September, the government said the amount of heroin seized by the Anti-Narcotics Department from 1996 to 1998 equaled the amount seized during the previous 20 years.

In 1997, 492 drug cases were prosecuted; in these 701 Jordanians and 102 other nationals were reported to have been involved. In the same year, 894 kg of hashish, 82 kg of heroin, 22 kg of opium, 237 grammes of cocaine and around two million pills were seized.

The most recent statistics for 1998 indicated that the department prosecuted 336 drug-related cases involving 581 Jordanians and 48 other nationals. In its investigations, the department seized 33 kg of hashish and 29 kg of heroin.

In late 1997, the Anti-Narcotics Department disclosed that drug abuse had increased over the past few years and that over 3,000 citizens were suffering from drug dependency.

Four years ago, His Majesty King Hussein sounded the alarm on Jordan's drug problem.

He said then that United Nations figures showed the Kingdom had 7,000 drug abusers, dependent mainly on tranquilisers but also heroin.

"We are either ashamed or we are unable to talk about this problem and start finding solutions, be it through tougher measures against smugglers and dealers or setting up centres to treat addicts and save them," the King said. "But to remain shy and to keep silent, in my view, is a mistake we are committing against ourselves and our children."



## Serbs launch operation to free captive soldiers

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AP) — Threatening strong measures to combat ethnic Albanian "terrorism," Serb forces launched a military action Saturday to try to free eight army soldiers held captive by guerrillas, sources said.

The Serb Media Centre in Pristina, which is close to Serbian authorities, said the operation began around 10 a.m. (0900 GMT) Saturday. It did not specify what the operation consisted of, but a huge army convoy was seen moving through the provincial capital Pristina Saturday morning, heading in the direction of the northwestern town of Kosovska Mitrovica.

Teams from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) had been trying to persuade the rebels to release the soldiers who were seized Friday, fearing the escalating violence will destroy the shaky cease-fire reached Oct. 12 to end seven months of fighting.

But an army source who declined to be identified told Belgrade's independent B-92 radio on Saturday that "all deadlines have expired." The OSCE could not immediately confirm the report.

The action came soon after the Serb side promised to respond to the captures and to the killing of three Serb policemen in a separate ambush.

The eight were taken captive near Kosovska Mitrovica, 40 kilometres northwest of Pristina. Friday when guerrillas attacked a Yugoslav convoy carrying rations to troops stationed in the field.

The rebel Kosovo Liberation Army said Saturday it had surrounded a vehicle and forced the eight to surrender after it entered KLA-held territory and opened fire on ethnic Albanian civilians.

"The captured were handed over to judicial bodies and will be treated according to international conventions of war and prisoners of war," the rebels regional command for northwestern Kosovo said in a statement distributed to ethnic Albanian media.

Serb authorities reacted to the incident by deploying tanks throughout Pristina late Friday.

The three policemen were killed Friday when KLA rebels fired an anti-tank weapon at their armoured vehicle near the village of Suva Reka, 50 kilometres



Rebels of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) run in their positions in the mountains over the village of Pecan, south of Pristina, during shelling by the Serb army of the village of Slapozan. The Serb army attacked Slapozan Saturday morning (AFP photo)

south of Pristina, the Serb Media Centre reported.

Four policemen and two civilians were seriously wounded in a fierce gun-battle that followed, the Serb centre said. Rebels in the area told reporters they attacked the police in retaliation for government shelling of a nearby ethnic Albanian village.

It was the first time that guerrillas have been known to destroy an armoured vehicle since fighting began in February. The

attack confirmed reports that rebels have obtained better weapons.

The KLA is fighting for independence from Serbia, the main republic in Yugoslavia.

The continuing violence has increased fears that the three-month-old cease-fire deal between Yugoslav President Slobodan

Milosevic and U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke is on the verge of falling apart.

Following the rebel attacks, a top Serbian official

in the province, Veljko Odalovic, told the government's Tanjug news agency that security forces will use "energetic and efficient action" to "normalise the situation" in Kosovo.

The attacks have alarmed the province's minority Serb population. Thursday, Serb crowds blocked all roads into Pristina.

Under the October agreement, ethnic Albanians and Serbs were to have begun negotiations on the future of the province. But no

face-to-face talks have been held, and both sides have rejected American proposals for expanded self-rule.

Ethnic Albanians form about 90 per cent of the 2 million people in Kosovo, and most want independence. The Americans and Europeans have rejected independence, fearing it could lead to similar demands by ethnic Albanian communities elsewhere in the southern Balkans.

## U.S. envoy sees progress in nuclear talks with India

JAIPUR, India (R) — Diplomatic talks to narrow differences between Washington and New Delhi after India's nuclear tests last year are likely to yield an understanding between the two nations, the U.S. ambassador to India said Saturday.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's special envoy, Jaswant Singh, have held several rounds of talks since India's stunning series of nuclear explosions last May.

"My hope and expectation is that it will lead to what Mr. Jaswant Singh calls a harmonisation of views... (and) I hope in my view in the not so distant future," Ambassador Richard Celeste told a seminar on Indo-U.S. relations.

Singh, who is also foreign minister, and Talbott are scheduled to hold another round of arms control talks later this month.

The United States imposed economic sanc-

tions on India and arch-rival Pakistan after the two nations staged rival nuclear tests in the same month. The sanctions have been partially lifted.

"I would hope that down the line the sanctions are completely lifted," Celeste said.

The sensitive negotiations have been stalled over the details of U.S. efforts to persuade India to sign a global test ban treaty and join the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

India says it is willing to negotiate its signature into the test ban treaty but differences remain on how to go about it.

New Delhi insists on a "minimum nuclear deterrence" while Washington wants India to hold off its missile development programme and cut off its nuclear weapons material production.

U.S. officials say they are bound by law to maintain the sanctions, which they see as a hindrance to trade.

Celeste said sanctions were clearly an obstacle in

the path of growing business between the two nations.

"Sanctions are not intended to promote business. In fact they interrupt business," Celeste said.

The ambassador said telecommunications and technology-driven industries were key areas in which the United States eyed strong bilateral trade relations.

He said that research and development relations had grown "irrespective of what happened in the past six months or one year."

Bilateral trade between the U.S. and India grew to \$10.94 billion in 1997 from \$5.2 billion in 1991, when India began its economic reform programme.

Indian exports accounted for \$7.32 billion while its imports from the U.S. accounted for \$3.62 billion in 1997.

Celeste said two-way trade in 1998 was estimated to be at least \$11.0 billion in spite of a sluggish trade environment.

## Bail denied for two men in alleged forced-marriage case

BUFFALO, New York (AP) — Two men accused of trying to smuggle a bound-and-gagged woman across the U.S. border in a frigid car trunk were denied bail Friday as family members disputed her claim of being forced into an arranged marriage.

A federal magistrate ruled that Afghanistans Aziz, 37, of Toronto, and Nader, 29, of San Francisco, are a danger to the woman, Mine Betoor.

Aziz, Ms. Betoor's uncle, and Nader, her would-be husband, face kidnapping and smuggling charges.

Immigration agents discovered Ms. Betoor at the Rainbow Bridge in Niagara Falls on Jan. 1. Authorities said her hands and feet had been bound, and a scarf was placed in her mouth and she had been in the trunk 2 1/2 hours.

Ms. Betoor, whose age was not released, told authorities she was trying to escape the Dec. 29 mar-

riage in Toronto when Aziz and Nader knocked her unconscious. She said she was held more than two days in the basement of her uncle's home before being put in the trunk, where she was joined by Nader. She said Aziz threatened to kill her if she made a noise.

In arguing against bail, federal prosecutors said Ms. Betoor fears for her life because her family supports the men.

Relatives claimed she is lying.

Aziz's brother, Abdul Aziz, and a cousin who would not give his name, said Ms. Betoor and Nader had been married since 1994.

They showed what appeared to be a marriage certificate from Pakistan and photos of Ms. Betoor and Nader together.

They claimed Ms. Betoor, living in Canada since 1995, wanted to see the United States. They said Ms. Betoor made up the arranged marriage

claim so she wouldn't get in trouble if caught, and that they were told she wanted to be gagged in case she panicked and screamed at the border.

Attorneys for Aziz and Nader said they were still sorting out details and could not confirm the claims.

"It would be unusual for an alien to want to be smuggled in bound and gagged," said assistant U.S. Attorney Trini Ross.

"Common sense says that makes absolutely no sense." And whether the couple really are married is irrelevant because a spouse has no authority to kidnap another spouse, she said.

Nader, a naturalised American citizen, was convicted last year of assaulting Ms. Betoor.

Aziz, a naturalised Canadian citizen, was convicted in 1996 of aiding and abetting people who illegally entered Canada.

## Hindu militant chief, bodyguard among 9 killed in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India (AFP) — Suspected Muslim separatists shot dead a provincial leader of a Hindu militant group and his bodyguard in the troubled state of Kashmir, police said Saturday.

Abdul Rashid Wani, Kashmir chief of firebrand Hindu leader Bal Thackeray's Shiv Sena party, which has threatened to disrupt a bus service and a cricket match between India and Pakistan, was gunned down in northern Sonawari village, a police spokesman said.

"A policeman was seriously injured in the shooting. They ambushed Wani's convoy and both of them died on the spot," the spokesman said.

Muslim separatists are

fighting for an independent homeland in the disputed Kashmir, claimed by both India and Pakistan.

"Kashmir is India's only Muslim-majority state, has been the cause of two of the three wars between the two arch South Asian rivals."

More than 24,000 people have been killed in the state since the rebels launched their insurgency against Indian rule in 1989.

The police spokesman said two militants were killed in a gunbattle with Indian soldiers in the border town of Kupwara while five members of a family, including two women, were gunned down by the militants in northern Kashmir overnight Friday.

He said one of the members was an informer to the Indian army.

The spokesman added security troops have stepped up "search operations" across the region ahead of India's Republic Day on Jan. 26.

Muslim guerrilla groups have vowed to disrupt the Republic Day functions and issued a call to observe the day as a "Black Day."

India accuses Pakistan of arming and training the guerrillas in the Indian sector.

Islamabad denies the charge but says it gives diplomatic and moral support to what it calls the Kashmiris' legitimate struggle for self-determination.

## Nigerians queue to vote in key state poll

LAGOS (R) — Nigerians lined up to vote Saturday for state governors and assemblies in elections which mark the latest step in the military's plan to restore democracy.

Three parties compete in the polls in 36 states. The elections are a prelude to votes in February for a national assembly and for a president to take over when General Abdulsalam Abubakar steps down in May, ending more than 15 years of army rule in Africa's most populous nation.

In Lagos, Nigeria's biggest city, voters turned out soon after 8 a.m. (0700 GMT) to get voters' cards stamped ahead of the ballot which begins at 11:30 a.m.

"We are seeing a great deal of enthusiasm here. Everything is orderly and voters are coming more quickly than they have done in previous polls," Sola Fayewumi of the Independent National Electoral Commission told Reuters in central Lagos.

The commission has promised to deal with logistical problems which were criticised during local government elections in December that were given a generally clean bill of health.

More than half a million

officials from the commission and the three parties have been deployed to ensure a fair vote.

The centrist Peoples Democratic Party is hoping to consolidate its position after the December vote in which it won control of 60 per cent of Nigeria's local councils.

The party was formed by politicians who opposed the late dictator Sani Abacha's bid to remain in power before his death in June made way for Abubakar, a soft-spoken career soldier.

Only two other parties did well enough in December to qualify for state and national elections.

The right-of-centre All People's Party, dubbed the "Abacha Peoples Party" by its detractors because of the presence of former Abacha supporters among its leaders, came a distant second in December.

The left-leaning Alliance for Democracy is expected to sweep the vote in its southwestern ethnic Yoruba heartland but make little impact elsewhere.

Because of the local importance of governors, who control a significant share of oil revenues distributed by the national

government, political rivalry has been intense and at times violent.

"It is my duty to warn all troublemakers to think again and desist from anything that will disrupt the transition," said police spokesman Ibrahim Danjuma in Abuja.

Election officials say results are not likely to be collated until at least Sunday.

Teams of international observers from the United Nations, the Commonwealth and other bodies have arrived to help local observers monitor implementation of Abubakar's democracy plan.

Only in southern Bayelsa State will insecurity prevent a ballot, following protests by ethnic Ijaw youths demanding a greater share of the region's oil wealth. Up to 26 were killed last weekend as troop reinforcements quelled the unrest.

There is no election in the capital Abuja, which is headed by a government minister rather than a governor.

Nigerians have gone through numerous attempts to end military rule but civilians have held power for only 10 years since independence from Britain in 1960.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### In Nigeria, two charged over child slavery case

ABAKALIKI, Nigeria (AFP) — Two Nigerian men have been indicted on counts related to child slavery after being found in charge of 57 missing children, the state-run Daily Times newspaper reported Saturday. The two, identified by the paper as Jeremiah Okoye and Martin Aligwe, were found with the children, all of whom had previously been declared missing from their homes in eastern Ebonyi State, the paper said in a brief front-page report. The paper did not provide details of when or where the men were held or the condition of the children. The paper had previously reported an alarm in Ebonyi at the number of children missing in the region. Ebonyi police spokesman Francis Bassey told the paper that the accused were charged with conspiracy, holding a meeting of an unlawful society, kidnapping and slave trading. Officials were not available Saturday to provide further details. Children's rights campaigners last year reported an alarming increase in the incidence of child slavery cases, linked to rising poverty.

### China jails tobacco tycoon for life for corruption

BEIJING (AFP) — A Chinese court has sentenced a tobacco tycoon to life imprisonment for corruption, Xinhua news agency said Saturday. Chu Shijian, former chairman and president of China's biggest tobacco company, Hongta (Group) Co Ltd, was sentenced by the Yunnan Provincial Higher People's Court. Chu was guilty of embezzlement and owning "huge amounts of property without clear sources," the agency said. China's leadership is cracking down on top-level graft, with the arrest of two top anti-smuggling officials on suspicion of corruption. Informed Chinese sources say one of the country's top five police officers was detained for graft in mid-December, around the time Premier Zhu Rongji told Communist Party officials the leadership was prepared to "kill, kill, kill" to make an example of high-ranking corrupt officials. Hongta produces the Hongtashan cigarette, which is regarded as the best of the domestically produced brands.

### Murder brings Milan's 1999 total to eight

MILAN, Italy (AFP) — The murder of a man at dawn Saturday in the northern city of Milan brought to eight the number gunned down this month in a bloody settling of gangland accounts, police said. Three other people, whom initial reports identified as Croas close to the city's criminal gangs, were injured, one of them seriously, in a separate shooting overnight in a bar in Milan, the economic hub of Italy. Police were still trying to identify the murder victim early Saturday. Investigators said the man had been shot in his apartment before fleeing in a stolen car, but collapsed and later died in hospital. A total of 41 people were slain between December 23 and January 6 in Italy. Victims outside Milan include a policeman killed in car bomb explosion, a priest murdered on Christmas Eve, five people slain in a bar in Sicily and an eight-year-old girl killed by a 16-year-old boy. Gangland settling of accounts have left eight dead in Campania in the south, two in Puglia in the southeast and two others in Calabria in the south. In all, 802 people were murdered in the country between January and November last year, the interior ministry said.

### Five die as car plunges off French holiday island bridge

LA ROCHE-SUR-YON, France (AFP) — A driver and four passengers died overnight when their car plunged off a bridge connecting the popular holiday island of Noirmoutier with the French mainland, police said Saturday. The car, a Peugeot 405, smashed through a barrier and fell 15 metres onto a parking area before bursting into flames. The five young victims are yet to be named but police believe they were local residents.

### 38 killed in Georgia bus crash

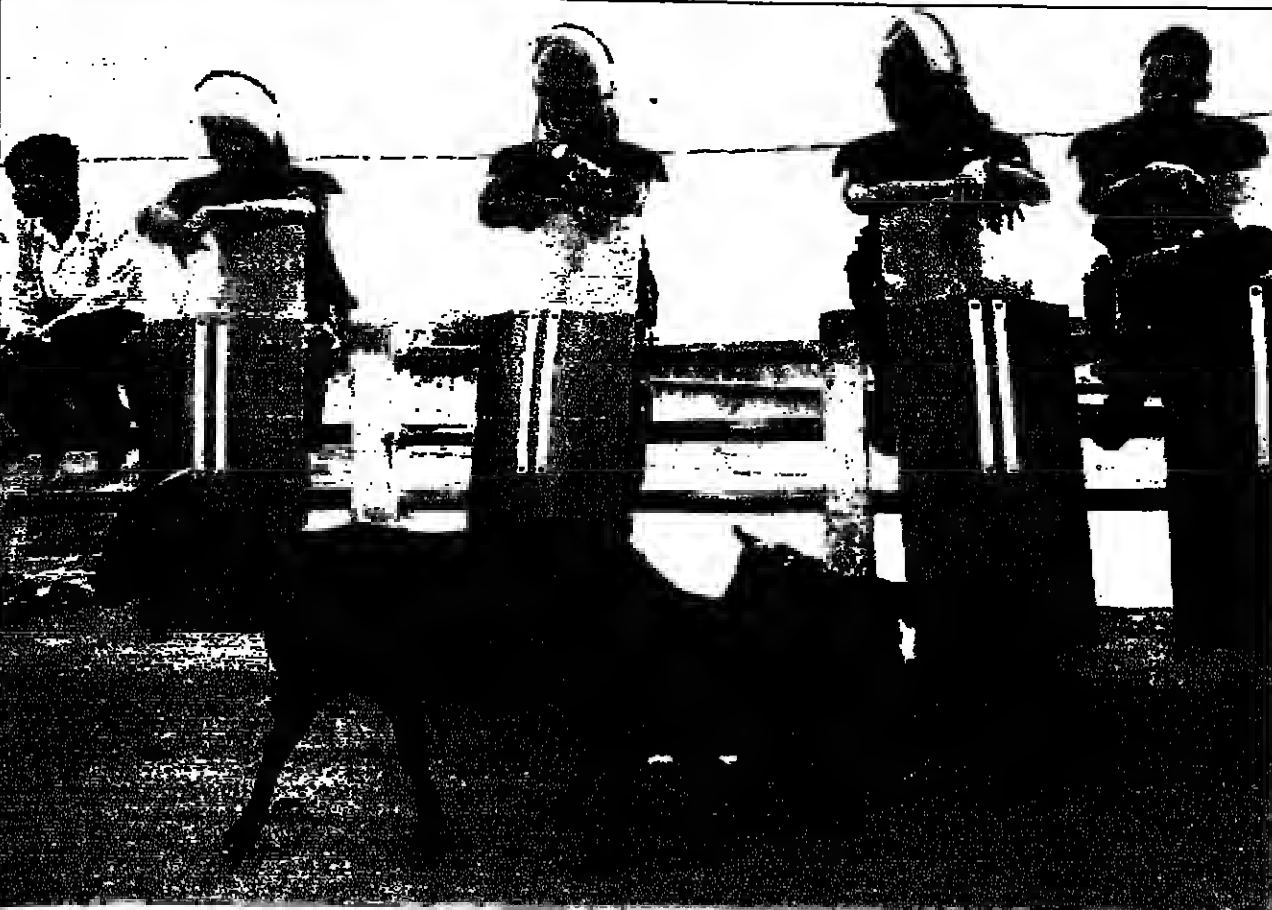
MOSCOW (AFP) — All 38 people aboard a bus which plunged into a ravine near Georgia's border with Russia Friday were killed, ITAR-TASS news agency reported Saturday, quoting the Russian ministry for emergencies. An earlier toll said 25 people were killed, but ITAR-TASS said that searches at the scene revealed that the bus had been carrying more passengers than was first thought. The bus was travelling through mountainous terrain on roads 2,500 metres above sea level towards a border crossing point near the village of Kazbegi when it came off the road and plummeted some 250 metres. The vehicle was bound for Vladikavkaz in the southern Russian republic of North Ossetia. ITAR-TASS reported that several of the passengers were returning home to Vladikavkaz from a funeral in Georgia. More than 100 rescuers from Georgia and Russia, headed by emergency minister Sergei Shoygu, went to the scene. Interfax news agency said 28 of the dead had so far been identified. All the victims were Russian, 20 of them women.

### Popeye weds Olive — sort of

NEW YORK (AP) — After 70 years, Popeye is finally tying the knot with Olive Oyl. Just not real tight. "This story is a one-shot fantasy," Claudia Smith of King Features Syndicate said of "The Wedding of Popeye and Olive." The special-edition comic book is now in production at Ocean Comics, an independent company under contract to King. In the official comic strip, the spinach-munching sailor remains "part of an eternal triangle, forever," said Ms. Smith, referring to Popeye, Olive and Popeye's longtime nemesis, Bluto. The eternal bachelor will keep his catchphrase "I yam what I yam," and he'll keep cackling his longtime line, "Next time I'm in port, we'll get married." Popeye first met the stick-thin Olive in 1929, when he discovered the stowaway aboard his ship. Ocean Comics publisher Bob Palin will be shipping thousands of the new Popeye comic books to wholesalers next month to be distributed to retailers. What inspired him to spin new life into an old tale? The bottom line is — the bottom line. "I really liked the character. And I thought I could sell some copies if we did a wedding," said Palin. Plus, "I think marriage is good for him."

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Goats walk in front of a group of Indonesian soldiers in full anti-riot gear guarding a bridge one day after massive riots hit the West Java city of Karawang, some 80 km from Jakarta. Security forces were reinforced throughout the city after two were killed when police opened fire to stem rioting and looting (AFP photo)

## Indonesian town tense, patrolled by army after riot

JAKARTA (AFP) — Army troops patrolled the streets of Karawang town east of here Saturday a day after rioting and looting left two dead when police opened fire to stem the violence, residents said.

"It's not settled down yet. There are lots of army troops out on the streets," a security guard at a Bank Central Asia office in Karawang, 80 kilometers east of Jakarta, said by telephone.

The bank, like others in the town, was shut, the guard told AFP.

He said that while people were on the streets, buses were not running and the only public transport was pedicabs and motor-cycle taxis.

A resident source identified the army troops as from the West Java command and said police were absent from the streets.

Police spokesmen were unavailable for comment, but the private SCTV television quoted Karawang district police chief Lieutenant Colonel Achmad Hidayat as saying 58 youths had been detained for questioning.

SCTV put the number of seriously injured at 14, with a further 15 slightly injured in Friday's violence.

A security guard at Karawang hospital, Dedeng, said 31 people had been treated, two of whom had died and 10 suffering serious injuries from bullets or rocks.

Dedeng said an 18-year-old youth died of a gunshot wound in the chest when police troops opened fire to try to control the mobs, while a second man had died after suffering gunshot wounds to the legs.

He identified the second victim as Udin bin Sali, a shop-

keeper. "He was just passing by on his way home, he was not involved in the riot at all," Dedeng told AFP.

At the private Dewi Sri hospital, an information officer clerk, Nunung, said the hospital had treated five riot victims as outpatients and admitted two others, one of whom had already been released.

The day-long riot Friday, the worst in Indonesia since the start of the year, degenerated into looting and vandalising of shops and churches.

Police fired several times in attempts to control the mob. The violence erupted after a mob of thousands gathered early in the day and moved to attack the local police station.

The station was pelted with rocks, and the crowd, dispersed with warning shots fired into their midst, regrouped nearby and began

to pelt shops and businesses.

The crowd rampaged down the main shop-lined streets, stoning buildings, including three churches, smashing flower pots, and dragging furniture into the street and burning it.

Hundreds of shops, showrooms, malls and shopping centres, four police posts and a sub-district police station were damaged by the mob, Colonel Hidayat told the Antara news agency.

One car was also set on fire, the private radio Sonora said.

Lieutenant Colonel Saleh of the national police information office in Jakarta said Friday the trouble had started Thursday over the rumoured harsh ticketing of a driver of a motorcycle taxi.

The protests swelled during Thursday, simmered during Friday, then erupted again Friday.

## Malaysian opposition questions PM's choice of successor

KUALA LUMPUR (AP) — Opposition leaders Saturday criticised Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's announcement of his hand-picked successor, calling it "a desperate exercise" to regain public confidence in his government.

In a massive cabinet reshuffle late Friday, Mahathir named Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, 59, as his deputy and also appointed him home minister, a key position which Malaysian premiers have traditionally kept to themselves.

Drowned in the hubbub of announcements — there were 13 new appointments in all — was the fact that Mahathir also named Daim Zaidin as Finance Minister, a position Mahathir took on a few months ago after sacking his former deputy prime minister, Anwar Ibrahim.

Anwar lost both posts when Mahathir fired him Sept. 2 amid a flurry of sexual misconduct allegations and declared him morally unfit to remain in government.

Mahathir was quoted as saying Saturday by the national news agency Bernama that it is "normal practice" for Abdullah to succeed him as prime minister, but cast some doubt on whether that would happen.

"Normally, the deputy becomes my successor. But I had three who didn't ... Nowadays, it's difficult to say, I'm scared to say," Mahathir said.

Opposition leaders, who have had little political clout during Mahathir's 17-year rule, doubted the reshuffle was an attempt to distribute power more equally in his cabinet.

"He will not succeed in deceiving the public into believing that power is now no more concentrated in his hands," Syed Husin Ali, president of the opposition Malaysian People's Party, said Saturday.

"In reality, the PM will continue to dominate the cabinet," he said. "The cabinet reshuffle appears to be a desperate exercise to regain public confidence in him and the government he leads."

Mahathir's administration has been in turmoil since he sacked Anwar. After leading massive anti-government protests, the former deputy was arrested and beaten while in police custody, causing an international outcry.

The beating sparked calls by opposition and human rights activists for Mahathir to relinquish the home minister's job.

The home minister is in charge of police.

Amid such controversy, many now believe that Mahathir's anointed successor, Abdullah, known as "Mr. Clean" among politicians, is the best compromise for preparing UMNO for general elections that must be held by April 2000.

A long-time loyalist in the ruling United Malays

National Organisation lauded Mahathir's moves, which were announced to reporters after a meeting of the 53-member UMNO Supreme Council.

"As home minister, he controlled the police and all the other intelligence agencies," the legislator said, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of repercussions.

"It's a crucial position which he has given up," he said.

"That's a sure sign Mahathir's bracing to step down, though he won't abruptly resign." The Coalition for People's Democracy said the reshuffled cabinet further erodes confidence in the government.

The coalition which is made up of 25 non-governmental organisations and opposition parties said in a statement that Abdullah "does not seem to have sufficient strength to balance the domination of Mahathir's cronies."

United Malays

## Lott promises fair Clinton impeachment trial

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. Senate will conduct President Bill Clinton's impeachment trial with "decency and decorum," Majority Leader Trent Lott said Saturday, adding Americans would be proud of Congress whatever the outcome.

The Mississippi Republican praised the spirit of bipartisanship that allowed the Senate to agree to a plan for proceeding with the trial, which adjourned after its ceremonial opening Thursday.

The format allows for the possibility of calling witnesses and would have the trial resume next week.

"All week we had seemed hopelessly divided," Lott said in the Republican response to Clinton's weekly radio address. "But after listening to one another, speaking face to face, we came together in the last 15 minutes of our meeting."

On a unanimous vote Friday, all 100 senators approved a road map for the trial that would postpone decisions on calling witnesses

until late January and require a majority Senate vote to approve them.

The dispute over witnesses had sharply divided the Senate, as Democrats said the live testimony requested by House of Representatives Republicans could spark a prolonged and bitter trial.

"In fairness, the Senate should have the opportunity to call witnesses if a majority of senators believe that is necessary to reach an impartial judgment," Lott said.

The agreement followed a rare two-hour informal closed session of senators from both parties in the Old Senate Chamber, down a Capitol hallway from where arguments will begin in the first presidential impeachment trial in more than 130 years.

Clinton is accused of perjury and obstruction of justice stemming from his effort to cover up a sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky, a former White House intern.

A two-thirds vote of senators would be required to convict Clinton and remove him from office, which at this point is considered unlikely.

"Throughout this process, we will insist on the highest standards of decency and decorum, not only in the Senate chamber itself, but in and around the Capitol," Lott said.

Despite predictions that the trial could paralyze legislative business in Congress, Lott told Americans: "The nation's other priorities are going to move ahead."

"Our committees will be meeting. Bills are being drafted as I speak. Hearings have already been held," he said.

Lott said lawmakers were ready to debate reform of the budget process, social security and tax relief for working families.

"I believe that, when this is all over, no matter what the outcome, you will be proud of your Senate — and prouder still that our system of government is able to handle even this momentous matter with civility, order and fairness," Lott said.

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ST. CHARLES, Missouri (AP) — An American man who injected his son with the AIDS virus to avoid paying child support has been sentenced to life in prison by a judge who warned he is going to "burn in hell from here to eternity."

Brian Stewart, 32, of Columbia, Illinois, stared straight ahead as Judge Ellsworth Cundiff handed down the maximum sentence Friday for first-degree assault. He would be eligible for parole in 15 years. The judge said he wished the sentence could have been tougher.

"My thought is injecting a child with the HIV virus really puts you in the same category as the worst war criminal," Cundiff said. "I believe when God finally calls you, you are going to burn in hell from here to eternity."

Stewart was convicted Dec. 6 of injecting AIDS-tainted blood into the boy, who was then 11 months old, during a hospital visit in 1992. The child, now 7, was diagnosed with AIDS in 1996. If the boy dies, Stewart could be tried for murder.

Prosecutors said Stewart was trying to avoid child-support payments. Stewart, who worked as a hospital technician at the time, stole the blood from his workplace, prosecutors said.

At the sentencing, the boy's mother, identified only as Jennifer, tearfully read a statement from the boy in which he said: "I feel mad. I think he shouldn't ever be out of jail. He shouldn't have done this. Why did he do such a bad thing to me?"

Stewart's lawyer, Joseph Murphy, said he already filed an appeal. "He's innocent," Murphy said.

The defence contended the boy could have contracted the virus a number of other ways. However, the boy had never had a blood transfusion, and a medical exam found no evidence of sexual abuse.

## Pessimism pervades Colombian peace talks

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — The hemisphere's most powerful rebel delivered a stern, vague warning to Colombia's government a day after shunning the inauguration of peace talks because of what his deputies called assassination attempt fears.

"We will remain in a fighting stance and will not give in to pressure from any system that has imposed violence and terror on us," Manuel Marulanda said in a short news video made during a meeting Friday in a jungle hideout with Daniel Ortega, the former Nicaraguan president and Sandinista rebel leader.

It was the first time in several years that the country had heard the voice of Marulanda, the hemisphere's oldest active rebel. In the video, Ortega pins a medal on Marulanda's camouflage fatigues.

A late-model sport utility vehicle, which the rebels periodically commandeered at roadblocks, was parked behind them.

Also Friday, the federal ombudsman's office, a government agency that protects human rights, said it relayed letters and photos from the rebels that prove 126 soldiers and police captured last August are still alive.

The rebels, who captured the troops when they overran a government anti-narcotics base, want to trade more than 300 prisoners for 452 jailed comrades.

The four government-appointed delegates, a powerful businessman, a former foreign min-

ister, a state governor and the president of the senate, planned to meet the three FARC negotiators — all high-level commanders — at an isolated location Saturday to discuss an agenda and timetable for peace talks.

Sources close to the process said Marulanda would not participate in those negotiations, but would likely be present during separate talks on the proposed prisoner swaps that are to begin Jan. 20.

The parleys are being held in the rebel-controlled region that President Andres Pastrana cleared of government troops as a condition for launching the third peace dialogue with the FARC in its 34-year struggle against the state.

Marulanda's deputies say he skipped Thursday's ceremony with Pastrana the town of San Vicente del Caguán because rebel intelligence indicated an attempt on his life was afoot.

His absence, and the harsh, uncompromising tone of a speech read in Marulanda's name by a guerrilla negotiator at Thursday's talks, embarrassed Pastrana before a national television audience and international dignitaries.

The 68-year-old rebel chief has been hiding in the mountains for most of the past half-century and has never appeared in such a public forum. Some speculated that stage fright was behind his failure to show.

But Ortega insisted it was because the rebels, also known as FARC, had credible information that Marulanda might have been in danger. Several news

reports said Marulanda was 10 minutes away by car when he turned back.

According to a poll published Friday in the El Espectador newspaper, there is deep public scepticism about prospects for peace.

Half of Colombians questioned believe the peace talks will drag on indefinitely. Another 27 per cent believe the talks are leading nowhere, and only 23 per cent believe they will result in peace.

The survey of 600 adults in five major cities, conducted Wednesday by the National Consulting Centre, had a margin of error of 4 percentage points.

Rebel security remained tight in San Vicente del Caguán, where more than 2,000 FARC guerrillas had parolled the streets and access routes for Thursday's ceremony, rebel sharpshooters sharing rooftop perches with Pastrana's police security squad.

Security is the main worry of rebel leaders as they launch the talks, and they are demanding that their landowner-backed night-wing paramilitary foes be disarmed as a first condition for serious negotiations.

At least 22 people were killed in several attacks in the northern state of Antioquia that coincided with Thursday's inauguration and were blamed by police on paramilitary fighters.

Paramilitary groups, formed more than a decade ago as a response to guerrilla kidnappings and extortion, often target civilians they suspect of collaborating with the rebels.

## Man sentenced to life in prison for injecting his son with HIV virus

ST. CHARLES, Missouri (AP) — An American man who injected his son with the AIDS virus to avoid paying child support has been sentenced to life in prison by a judge who warned he is going to "burn in hell from here to eternity."

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"My thought is injecting a child with the HIV virus really puts you in the same category as the worst war criminal," Cundiff said. "I believe when God finally calls you, you are going to burn in hell from here to eternity."

Stewart was convicted Dec. 6 of injecting AIDS-tainted blood into the boy, who was then 11 months old, during a hospital visit in 1992. The child, now 7, was diagnosed with AIDS in 1996. If the boy dies, Stewart could be tried for murder.

Prosecutors said Stewart was trying to avoid child-support payments. Stewart, who worked as a hospital technician at the time, stole the blood from his workplace, prosecutors said.

At the sentencing, the boy's mother, identified only as Jennifer, tearfully read a statement from the boy in which he said: "I feel mad. I think he shouldn't ever be out of jail. He shouldn't have done this. Why did he do such a bad thing to me?"

Stewart's lawyer, Joseph Murphy, said he already filed an appeal. "He's innocent," Murphy said.

The defence contended the boy could have contracted the virus a number of other ways. However, the boy had never had a blood transfusion, and a medical exam found no evidence of sexual abuse.

## Teen couple's troubled romance ends in tragedy

CARROLLTON, Georgia (AP) — A high school where an apparent double-suicide attempt left a teenage girl dead and her boyfriend seriously wounded invited grief counsellors to campus Saturday to help their shocked classmates.

The shootings in a Central High School bathroom Friday killed 15-year-old Andrea Garrett and wounded Jeff Miller, 17. Parents and fellow students were stunned.

"They said all the colour

went out of me; I got weak in the knees," said Joani Ostec. A parent who rushed to the school after word of the violence spread through the west Georgia town of 17,000.

"You see it on TV all the time, but not here."

Fellow students said the young couple had been having problems, and that Ms. Garrett was under pressure from her parents to end the romance.

Miller recently had said that he "wouldn't be here

much longer," said Tiffany Ostec, 17.

"We thought it was just all talk," said Ms. Smith, who was in the marching band with Andrea. "Young love, you know." But shortly after school started Friday, a janitor found the couple shot in a girls' bathroom.

Ms. Garrett died at Tanner Medical Centre. Miller was airlifted in critical condition to Crawford Long Hospital in Atlanta, about 65 km to the east. At the family's request, hospital

officials declined to give updates on the boy's condition.

"This apparently was something that was agreed upon by the two kids," said Carroll County Sheriff Tony Reeves. "They chose to do this for whatever reason at the school."

The weapon was a .22-calibre pistol that was taken from a locked safe belonging to the girl's parents. Investigators were trying to determine who fired the shots.

The four government-appointed delegates, a powerful businessman, a former foreign min-

ister, a state governor and the president of the senate, planned to meet the three FARC negotiators — all high-level commanders — at an isolated location Saturday to discuss an agenda and timetable for peace talks.

Sources close to the process said Marulanda would not participate in those negotiations, but would likely be present during separate talks on the proposed prisoner swaps that are to begin Jan. 20.

The parleys are being held in the rebel-controlled region that President Andres Pastrana cleared of government troops as a condition for launching the third peace dialogue with the FARC in its 34-year struggle against the state.

Marulanda's deputies say he skipped Thursday's ceremony with Pastrana the town of San Vicente del Caguán because rebel intelligence indicated an attempt on his life was afoot.

His absence, and the harsh, uncompromising tone of a speech read in Marulanda's name by a guerrilla negotiator at Thursday's talks, embarrassed Pastrana before a national television audience and international dignitaries.

The 68-year-old rebel chief has been hiding in the mountains for most of the past half-century and has never appeared in such a public forum. Some speculated that stage fright was behind his failure to show.

But Ortega insisted it was because the rebels, also known as FARC, had credible information that Marulanda might have been in danger. Several news



## Jordan Times

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Elia Nasrallah

Editorial and Advertising offices  
Jordan Press Foundation,  
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman

Telephones: 5684311, 5699634, 5667171, 5603585

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## Time to re-examine Iraq file

AS RUSSIA spearheads a call for the resignation of UNSCOM Chairman Richard Butler, following revelations that UNSCOM precipitated the December U.S. and British strikes against Iraq, Washington prepares itself to live without UNSCOM. The U.S. said Friday that it no longer insists on the reactivation of UNSCOM and would rely on other means to keep tabs on Iraq's weapons programmes. UNSCOM and its chairman have made the limelight in recent days when it was found that they compromised not only their own integrity but also that of the U.N. by spying for the CIA and other intelligence services.

Former Deputy Chairman of UNSCOM Scott Ritter's actions were the first to raise doubt about the legitimacy of UNSCOM when he was caught cooperating with Israel's Mossad. Ritter later accused UNSCOM's chairman of deliberately engineering last month's attacks on Iraq. Ever since more and more evidence has surfaced implicating UNSCOM and its leadership with complicity in supplying the CIA with intelligence reports about Iraq.

On the strength of what we know already, the military strikes against Baghdad were clearly unwarranted. That Washington and London exploited and used UNSCOM in order to achieve certain military and political objectives makes them suspect, and both capitals stand accused of fabricating and manipulating information or spreading disinformation to legitimise their joint efforts to terminate the ruling Iraqi regime.

As Paris, Moscow and Beijing have concluded, we now have a new ball game over the Iraqi conflict and a fresh start is certainly called for. What is still ominously missing is a collective Arab voice demanding the rectification of the grave errors committed against Iraq as a country and people. The least that we may expect is Arab insistence on the resignation of Butler and the reconstitution of the U.N. weapons inspection team in Iraq on more solid ground. The international community is up in arms over the shocking revelations about the true mission of UNSCOM. Arab silence could ultimately compromise the various Arab regimes which stood solidly behind the military strikes against Iraq. With Iraq now also questioning the legitimacy of the no-fly zones imposed by Washington and London, the stage is set for a new appraisal of the entire Iraqi file. Arab capitals should make themselves heard on the side of what is right and what is not, and become an integral part of the awaited review.

### ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Faneek said analysts supported the notion that U.S. President Bill Clinton's visit to the Palestinian National Authority areas aimed to save his presidency by diverting attention from the Lewinsky's scandal and to find a solution to the deadlocked peace process. However, Clinton failed to achieve anything because the Wye River Accord and entire peace process has been frozen by an official Israeli decision. And when Clinton returned to Washington, impeachment was waiting for him anyway. It has been proven that Clinton's "kindness" to the Palestinians during his trip was only a pacification en route to attacking Iraq. He gave that "concession" only after his advisors told him that the Arab people will be against the aggression, not because they sympathise with Iraq, but because they are fed up with U.S. double standards in dealing with Israel, said the writer. Even that goal, Clinton has failed, said Faneek.

Al Dostour's editorial said the accusation that UNSCOM are spies is no longer an Iraq accusation, but a serious case debated by the international community. Recent information reported by global media quoting intelligence and former UNSCOM officials articulated the how international committee used legitimate resolutions to interfere in U.N. members' affairs. The spying scandal requires the U.N. to reclaim its role in the Iraqi crisis, said the newspaper, adding that the international body must end the U.S. domination of the world. Washington has not withdrawn from its stubborn position after these oews reports. To the contrary, it maintains an aggressive stance towards Iraq, threatening to attack again after the Holy Month of Ramadan. Al Dostour condemned the U.N. and UNSCOM's involvement in spying missions against an independent state, and called on Arabs to unify their actions to stop this violation of international laws and principles and to confront a possible strike on Iraq.

# Privatisation needs political will

THE LIST of enterprises co-vised by the privatisation programme in Jordan is very short indeed. The programme can be carried out in a relatively short period of time, unlike Egypt where the privatisation programme needs many years before Egypt can fully shift from the public to the private sector as far as ownership and management of hundreds of companies and corporations are concerned.

If the Egyptian privatisation programme continues at its present pace, it will need some 35 more years. By contrast, the Jordanian privatisation programme does not need more than one to three years of hard work.

The private sector in Jordan has always been alive. We are not about to create a new private sector. All that we need is to encourage, motivate, and invigorate our existing private sector to play its role fully.

The economic activities currently carried out by the Jordanian public sector are limited. Such activities, which are eligible for privatisation, contribute no more than 6 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). Such activities can be turned over to the private sector without major consequences and without hurting the present shareholders, employees, or customers, as was proved beyond doubt upon the privatisation of the Jordan Cement Factories Company (JCFC), which was operationally smooth and financially beneficial to all parties concerned.

The privatisation programme includes hotels. The Jordan Intercontinental Hotel was privatised two years ago, in a transaction that secured the treasury eight times its original investment. The immediate result was the expansion of the hotel's capacity and the doubling of

jobs. What remains is the Ma'in resort hotel, the privatisation of which is supposed to take place within weeks. This will put an end to the financial attrition, create a real international resort, triple the number of staff, and generate more tourists especially from Europe.

The government still holds a big chunk of shares in several large and medium size companies, a state of affairs which came about because the government was trying to save the companies concerned, and inject them with badly needed cash in order to survive. Since those circumstances changed, the withdrawal of the government from these companies became not only possible but also desirable. The JCFC was a good example of what to expect following the sale of government shares either to the private sector or to a strategic partner. The government received

## Sunday's Economic Pulse



Dr. Fahed Faneek

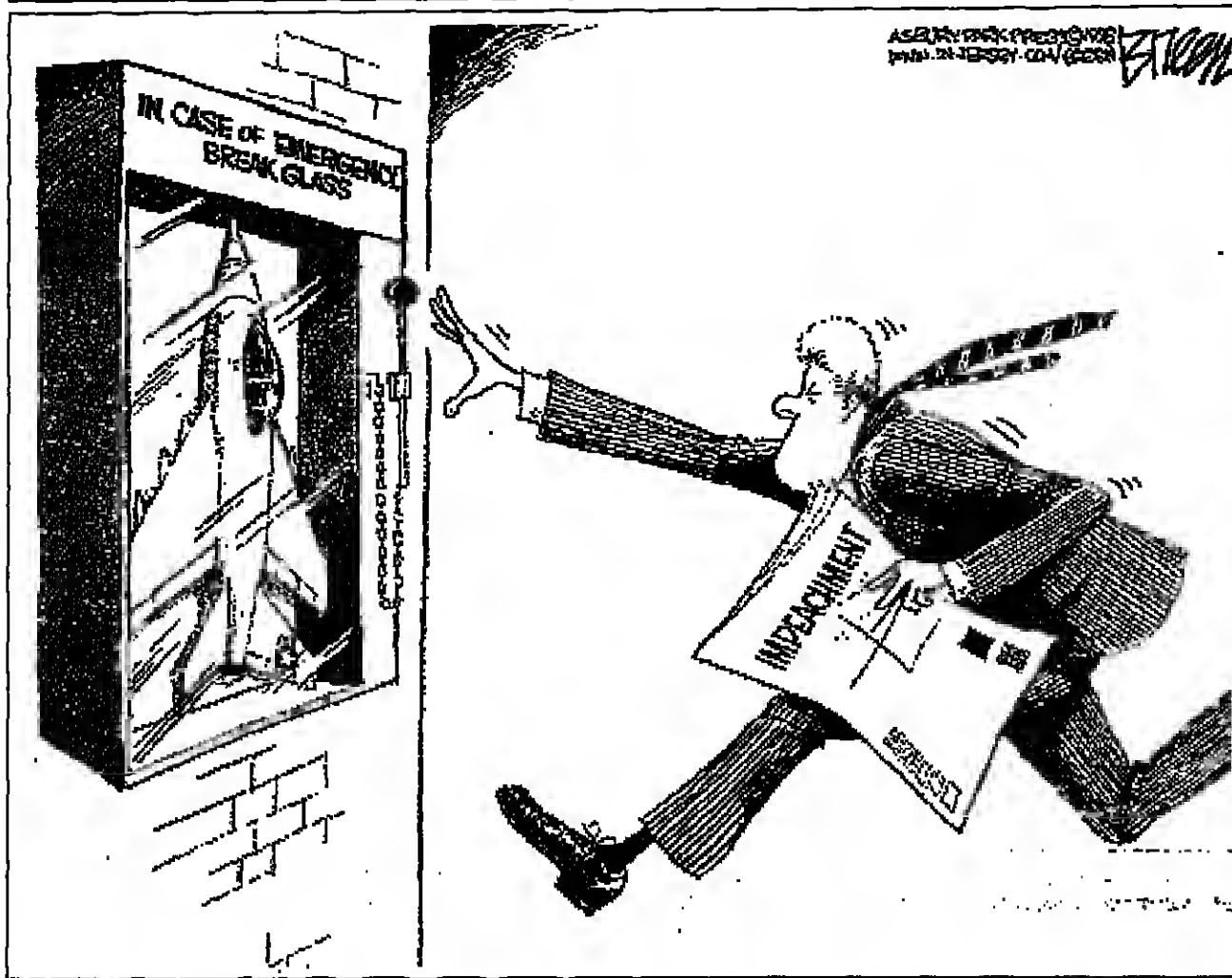
A lot of mooney, the value of shares rose drastically in the market which benefited shareholders. The employees benefited as they could shares at reduced prices, and the company embarked on a meaningful modernisation programme.

In the area of transport, the pri-

vatation of the Public Transport Corporation was recently completed. The remaining bus routes were granted to qualified private sector operators, which in turn will replace the present obsolete and dangerous buses without any cost to the tax payers. The privatised routes will need more drivers and other supporting staff, and the government's role will shift from that of a bad transport operator to that of a good transport regulator. Needless to say, the public will get better service.

On the privatisation list are: The Aqaba Railway Corporation, The Royal Jordanian Airline, Jordan Water Authority, National Electricity Company, and Jordan Telecom.

The privatisation of these enterprises will be good news for the treasury, the national economy, and the public at large. All that is needed, and hopefully not lacking, is the political will.



## On the legality of the no-fly zones in Iraq

By Pascal B. Karmy

JAMES RUBIN, spokesman of the State Department very recently stated that the no-fly zones in the north and south of Iraq were established by virtue of Security Council resolutions pertinent to Iraq. It is as a consequence of these resolutions, in other words, that the United States and its coalition allies (with the probable urging of the extremist Shiites in the south and the Kurds in the north), came up with the plan of establishing air-exclusion zones, in which the flight of Iraqi aircraft including helicopters is prohibited.

However, it must be admitted that the creation of no-fly zones is not supported or legitimised by any clear and concrete Security Council resolution on Iraq, even if the Security Council resolutions on Iraq are liberally interpreted. Indeed it is the result of the containment policy of the United States rather than the result of any Security Council resolution. As the White House spokesman Joe Lockhart stated a few days ago, the no-fly zones "are an important part of our containment limiting Saddam Hussein's ability to threaten his neighbours and repress his own people".

Thus the establishment of no-fly zones in Iraq does not fall within the ambit of the enforcement measures imposed upon Iraq under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, and consequently the establishment of those zones and the shooting down of any Iraqi aircraft which flies over those zones constitute an interference in the internal affairs of Iraq and a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter provisions. Paragraph 4 of Article 2 of the U.N. Charter provides as follows:

"All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purpose of the United Nations."

Paragraph 7 of the same article reads as follows: "Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorise the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the members to submit such matters to settlement under the

present charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII."

And as stated above, the enforcement measure imposed upon Iraq under Chapter VII does not entitle the United

*'With regard to the Kurds, the Iraqi government has long ago recognised them as an entity as well as their language and culture, unlike the Kurds in Turkey... Why does not the United States try to help the Kurds in Turkey?'*

States and its coalition partners to establish air-exclusion zones. Apart from the illegality of the air-exclusion zones, it is in itself a dangerous precedent especially in the mosaic states of the Middle East.

The establishment of the air-exclusion zones is allegedly grounded in the fact that the Shiites in the south and the Kurds in the north are being persecuted by the Iraqi regime. An observer, however, may rightly wonder why the United States have not tried to create separate zones in the West Bank and Gaza Strip under the umbrella of the United Nations so as to protect the Palestinians from the savage treatment of the occupying power, as provided in Geneva Convention IV of 1949 regarding the protection of civilians. How has the conscience of the United States and its coalition allies been awakened to protect the Shiites and the Kurds from their own government, yet remains in the doldrums as far as the Palestinians are concerned?

The Shiites are a part and parcel of Iraq since the advent of Islam in the 7th century A.D. They enjoy rights and privileges on the same footing as other

Iraqi citizens. They participate in Iraqi politics as members of parliament or in government and many of them have been ministers and prime ministers. If dictatorial or despotic rule prevails in Iraq, it is applicable across the board and not necessarily aimed at the Shiites only. With regard to the Kurds, the Iraqi government has long ago recognised them as an entity as well as their language and culture, unlike the Kurds in Turkey whose language and culture are suppressed and their special identity not recognised. Why does not the United States try to help the Kurds in Turkey who are suppressed and persecuted and who are fighting for an autonomous rule within Turkey? Why this double-standard? The answer is simple enough: Turkey is a member of NATO and is an ally of the United States.

It is claimed by the United States that they do not intend to partition Iraq and they respect its independence and integrity. Those are fine words indeed. But on the ground it is feared that the establishment of no-fly zones will be exploited by the Shiites and Kurds so as to form separate entities and thus dismember Iraq as has actually happened with the northern Kurdish part of Iraq. The Kurds of Iraq are virtually independent for all intents and purposes as they have their own parliament and their own government. In other words they have their own mini-states. But the creation of mini-states on ethnic or confessional divisions will inevitably lead to internecine conflicts resulting in more instability in the Middle East.

We have witnessed numerous conflicts along ethnic or confessional lines in what used to be called Yugoslavia, the ex-Soviet Union and in Afghanistan with tragic effects on the civilian population. Such a result is neither in the interest of the United States or Europe or for that matter, the new world order.

The writer was an advocate in Palestine in 1944 and, for many years, legal officer at UNRWA headquarters in Beirut and Vienna.

## LETTERS

### A Ramadan gift

To His Majesty:

In the name of God, the Merciful the Compassionate.

YOUR TOTAL recovery after completing chemotherapy treatment at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota is a victory for your personal courage and for your determination to win the "cancer war". It is a historical victory for the Jordanian people, and, above all, it is a victory for God's will, wisdom and destiny.

This is great news to all Jordanians. Thanks to You, God Almighty, for Your gift to the Jordanian family in the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Jordanians cannot wait these coming few days of recuperation before, God willing, you arrive in your birth place Amman, the pride and beauty of Jordan and Jordanians.

May God bless you, protect you, and keep you in a good health.

Dr. Jamal A. Shurdom  
Founder & Executive Director  
The Middle East Consultations & Research  
Analysis - MECRA  
Post Office Box 677972  
Orlando, Florida 32867  
e-mail: mecra@aol.com

### The future is peace

To the editor:

I WOULD LIKE to react to Mr. Rami Khouri's recent article ("Palestinian houses, Jacob and the road to heaven and hell", JT January 5). It expresses outrage over the demolition of Palestinian houses by the Israeli military authorities and concentrates on the most recent case — the demolition of the home of Husam Abu Yakoub at the village of Kifl Hares. As a matter of fact quite some people in Israel share his feeling of shock and outrage.

I would like to comment on one positive thing amidst this shameful event. Mr. Abu Yakoub, the owner of the destroyed house, did not allow his bards experience to lead him into blind hatred of all Israelis. Instead, he and his neighbours at Kifl Hares stood shoulder to shoulder with a hundred Israeli activists of the Committee Against House Demolitions and Gush Shalom (the Israeli Peace Bloc) during a protest action on the weekend. Though the army prevented the Israelis from entering the village and taking part physically in the rebuilding of the demolished house, the act of our standing together, Israelis and Palestinians, was for all of us who were there, an affirmation that a peaceful future is possible and even inevitable — a future in which the Palestinians will be free of the occupation with all its manifestations, free to build homes on their land without apprehension that they will be demolished; in which young Israelis will be free of the agonising choice of either serving in an army of occupation or going to prison; in which the shared memories of such ancestral Patriarchs and Prophets as Ya'akov/Yakoub will serve as a bridge between the two friendly neighbours.

Adam Keller - Gush Shalom spokesperson  
PO BOX 3322  
Tel-Aviv - 61033  
phone: 03-5565894  
email: adam@gush-shalom.org

### First impressions last

To the editor:

THE FIRST impression of any tourist of any country he/she visits is reflected by this country's airport. So Jordan has a big problem.

When I came to Amman for the Christmas holiday I didn't have any Jordanian money, which I didn't believe to be a problem, until I wanted to get a trolley for my baggage — which costs JD1.

At Beirut airport porter services are free, and you are not allowed to give the porter a tip.

The plane landed in Amman at 6:30p.m. but with all the procedures I was out at around 8 something. In Beirut on the other hand, I was out half an hour after landing.

What sort of first impression are we giving tourists?

Jomana Wael Karadsheb  
American University of Beirut

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

Everyone

By David

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# Who killed the little beauty-queen?

Everyone has a theory about the murder of JonBenet Ramsey. Now, at last, America may discover the terrible truth

By David Usborne

INVESTIGATORS TRACKING the killer of six-year-old JonBenet Ramsey, the former child pageant queen from Boulder, Colorado, have never had much to work with. They do at least have the scribbled ransom note found in the home of her parents, Patsy and John Ramsey. Asking for \$118,000 for the little girl, the message included this warning to her father: "Don't try to grow a brain, John." There was no need for Mr. Ramsey to agonise over the note. Hours after JonBenet was declared missing on December 26, 1996, he forced open a jammed door in the basement of the Tudor-style house and found the limp body of his daughter, bludgeoned, garroted and possibly sexually molested. Two years later, no arrests have been made and people are wondering: is it the police who have failed to grow a brain?

This week, a grand jury, first assembled in Boulder last September to sift through what scant evidence there is, resumes its work after a month's break. This time, the grand jury will not stop until it can do no more: either they will admit defeat and the JonBenet murder trail will be left to go cold, or charges will be filed and the way will be opened at last for a trial.

An entire nation is agog, and everyone has a dinner-table theory. Was the killer an unknown intruder, as Mr. and Mrs. Ramsey through their lawyer, continue to insist? Or could JonBenet's elder brother, Burke, just nine at the time, have committed so heinous a crime? Or was it the parents — or just one of the parents — who smashed the skull of the former Little Miss Colorado and throttled her with the garrote? The couple now live 1,200 miles away in suburban Atlanta. As the only people identified by the Boulder authorities as under an "umbrella of suspicion," they know that their fates are in the balance. Both are expected to testify very soon before the grand jury, on the events of that night.

Few crimes this century, with the obvious exception of the trial of the football star O. J. Simpson, have so fascinated the American public. For two years, the story has been a front-cover staple of supermarket tabloids and news weeklies alike. Barely a night passes without haunting footage running on America's television screens of the perky tot, all golden hair and sparkling eyes, treading the board on the junior pageant circuit. Whole continents of the Internet are dedicated to web pages on the mystery.

At the heart of the media coverage is one constant theme: a frenzy of criticism of the Boulder police and the city's benighted district

attorney, Alex Hunter. Bungled detective work in the investigation's first hours created an image of the Boulder police team as clones of the Keystone Cops. So, too, did a string of angry resignations in Hunter's police team last year. Above all are the suspicions that, because of their wealth and high standing in Boulder society, the Ramseys have received kid-glove treatment. John Ramsey, 55, made a personal fortune when several years ago he sold a computer business, and is now building another computer company in Atlanta. Patsy Ramsey, 41, is herself a former beauty queen from West Virginia. Together the couple seemed to represent the quintessential American success story, with a happy home and a prosperous bank account.

Typical of the popular mistrust was this observation from Dave Ruby, an apprentice carpenter, made to me over coffee in Boulder's trendy Russian Tea Room on a recent afternoon: "This has been swept under the carpet. These were people who lived up on the hill; no one wants to touch them." Never mind that unsolved homicides in the United States are hardly rare. Indeed, roughly one-third of the murders in this country in any average year slip between the cracks of the justice system without so much as a single arrest being made. This has as much to do with politics as with forensic methods. District attorneys in general are reluctant to press charges unless they are confident the case will fly before a jury. They would rather let a case drop than risk an acquittal and a black mark against their record.

But this case is different; the public has grown to know JonBenet almost as an additional family member in its collective front room, and it wants her killer found, tried and delivered to punishment. With the criticism of Hunter and the police, however, also comes widespread pessimism that that day of judgement will ever arrive. "This case seems almost frozen in time," Craig Silverman, a former Denver prosecutor, remarked last week. "All we know is that she was killed, and that a killer is on the loose. Usually, when a child killer is at large, there is a sense of urgency."

Even Henry Lee, a nationally renowned forensic expert who is serving as an adviser to Hunter, offers little hope. "We don't have much information from the witnesses. We don't have a major piece of physical evidence yet. Also, we don't have that much luck yet," he commented recently. "That's why it's extremely difficult."

Indeed, there have been setbacks from the outset. The last time the Ramseys saw their daughter alive, according to their version of

events, was when she went to bed on Christmas Day, filled with excitement over the silver bicycle given to her by her parents. At 5.30 a.m. on Boxing Day, Patsy Ramsey rose from her bed and went downstairs to make coffee. She found the ransom note on the back stairs of



the house, telling her that her daughter had been kidnapped and demanding the money. After waking her husband, Mrs. Ramsey alerted the police. Officers soon arrived at the house, but it was only eight hours later, at about 2 p.m., that Mr. Ramsey, after a long search through the house, found the little girl's body behind the basement door. The body remained in the house until 10:45 p.m. that evening, when it was removed by staff from the Boulder County Coroner's Office.

Allowing Mr. Ramsey to tramp through the house in search of JonBenet and indeed to handle the body of his daughter, was the first and possibly the most serious of the mistakes committed by detectives, all from a police department that had not had to deal with a homicide in Boulder for several years. Other friends were also allowed to wander through the Ram-

sey home that day. That alone will be manna to the defence, should the case ever come to trial. When Boulder's police chief Tom Koby withdrew as head of the investigation in October 1997, he acknowledged that errors had been made. "If we had it to do all over again, we would do it differently," he said.

Joseph Wambaugh, the crime novelist, who is a former detective himself, noted another lapse in basic police conduct in an interview last month with People magazine — the failure of the detectives, when they arrived at the Ramsey house, to separate Patsy and John Ramsey and to question them individually. This gave them ample opportunity to coordinate their story. It was April 30, 1997 before the Ramseys finally submitted to a first round of formal interviews with investigators in Boulder. "It's police-school basic 101," Wambaugh commented. The problem, he said, is that "when police get involved in a case that involves wealthy, prominent people, they tend to panic." Then there is also the simple disadvantage of the passage of time. Statistically, most homicide puzzles are successfully solved within days of being committed. "As the case becomes colder, the chance is reduced," Mr. Lee observed.

The cul de sac nature of the case was well illustrated by last summer's resignations. In August, Detective Steve Thomas walked out of the Boulder police department, noisily accusing Hunter of sabotaging the investigation by all but siding with Mr. and Mrs. Ramsey. A month later, Lou Smith, a veteran homicide detective brought out of retirement to assist with the investigation, also withdrew, declaring that the police were unfairly persecuting the bereaved parents and were blind to the possibility that the murderer might indeed have been an unidentified intruder. In his letter, he stated: "The Ramseys did not do it."

In a column last week in the Denver Post, Chuck Green, a journalist who has probably invested more ink in the story than anyone else in his profession, offered this grim observation. "If ever the public gets to fully view police conduct in the investigation and evidence in this case, it will be a sad and tragic portrait of police failures, political manoeuvring and family belligerence."

Mr. Green is among those who hold little hope that charges will ever be brought. But so long as the grand jury is meeting, there must still be a chance. Indeed, it is impossible for us on the outside to know just what has been given to the jury members to consider. The few pieces of information in the public domain have come via unsourced leaks of doubtful reliability, mostly given to the Denver newspapers.

It would seem, however, that some progress may have been made over recent months.

The police have reportedly secured important DNA samples from the crime scene. We know that Mr. and Mrs. Ramsey have supplied investigators with samples of their own DNA. We are also told that investigators have secured four fibres found on the duct tape that was used to gag JonBenet, and that a match has been made between the fibres and the clothing worn by Patsy on the night of the murder. Also, laboratory work has enhanced the recording of Patsy Ramsey's first, frantic emergency call to the police, early on Boxing Day. It reportedly reveals the voice in the background to be that of her son, Burke, asking what was going on and being told firmly to return to his room. That, however, contradicts their original version of events. They said that Burke had remained asleep until the police arrived.

The key to the case, however, may yet lie with the ransom note, hurriedly written, later found to have been ripped from a pad in the Ramsey home. Running over three pages, it began: "Listen carefully. We are a group of individuals that represent a small foreign faction," and went on to demand the \$118,000 in ransom money from Mr. Ramsey. If popular speculation as to the identity of the killer seems to focus on Patsy Ramsey, it is because of this note. The task of analysing it was eventually handed to a professor of English, Donald Fraser, the expert who unveiled the political columnist Joe Klein as author of the anonymous best-seller, *Primary Colours*. Fraser ruled out both John and Burke Ramsey as possible authors of the ransom note. He could not do the same for Patsy, however, telling investigators that while he could not definitively link it to her, it bore her "rhetorical stamp."

At last we can count in months, if not weeks, the time left before we know if the slaying of JonBenet will remain a mystery or whether her killer may be brought to justice. Either way, it will remain one of the most compelling tragedies in the annals of American crime. As well as our sadness for JonBenet, another emotion has surely coloured our response to this story: a revulsion, fuelled by that video footage shown over and over on TV, at the gruesome American tradition of child beauty pageants.

If you imagine that this tale might, at least, have led to the circuit's decline, think again. The number of entrants in the All-Star Kids pageant in Colorado in 1996, when JonBenet competed, stood at 15. Since her death, People magazine reports, it has jumped to nearly 50.

— The Independent

## Darat Al Funun: Celebrating the tenth anniversary exhibition of contemporary Arab artists

By Carol Malt

SOME CAME out of curiosity, others homage; many just to learn. Most came to celebrate, and a few even came to purchase. On November 24, they lit up the Darat Al Funun with their enthusiasm, their curiosity and their appreciation. In turn, the Darat Al Funun revealed its treasures, opened its galleries and shared its cultural achievements with the people of Amman.

The occasion was the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the founding of the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, the 10th Anniversary of the establishment of the Foundation's art gallery and the opening reception of the Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists.

The creation of the Darat Al Funun by the Foundation bespeaks the unique vision of Mrs. Suha Shoman. This vision, now a reality, showcases the arts, encourages artists and serves as an educational resource for the community.

The concept of the Darat Al Funun reaches far beyond the display of art works. It encompasses teaching, workshops, a reference and video library, Internet services, a lecture series, films, gallery walks, publications — and given its

extensive grounds, performing arts programs of theatre, dance and music. It has become an Art Centre in the full context of the word: one with international participation and influence.

And just in case one doubted the full extent of the multi-dimensional activities which have been presented since 1993, the entire central hall of the lower gallery complex graphically portrays the presentations in chronological order. The wall panels, with their didactic material, are works of art themselves. Also included in the room is an absorbing video which expands the historical presentation and features selected art works from the Darat al Funun's stable of Arab artists.

What is not graphically spelled out in the historical presentation is the methodology, the effectiveness and the essence of their programs. Allow me to pontificate for a moment for that is what museologists and museum directors do. What is the main purpose of an art centre or a museum? To collect? It used to be; but not so, anymore. It is to enlighten, to educate, and to entertain.

Enlighten? Yes, through the vision of the artist we can be uplifted, we can see unity, feel peace, explore the human universe. Educate? Definitely. Our lives become

richer, more fulfilled when we can visually see our past, and contemplate our future. Entertain? That is a difficult mandate, and possibly a misunderstood one. Think of the sheer pleasure of sensing vibrant color, the timelessness and comfort of good design, the happiness in a fine portrait. Learning, we know, is easier when the subject is both relevant and made fun.

Take my three criteria with you on your visit to the Darat Al Funun's Tenth Anniversary Exhibit. There is a sense of awe, of enlightenment, upon entry into the campus. The visitor is enveloped in the architectural and landscape environment, channelled by well designed walk and stairways, past sculptural installations, to the galleries. Enlightenment awaits in unexpected corners, even at dead ends. Contemplate the vast, textured universe of Mohammad Qaitouqi's painting; be drawn into its mysterious depths and face yourself.

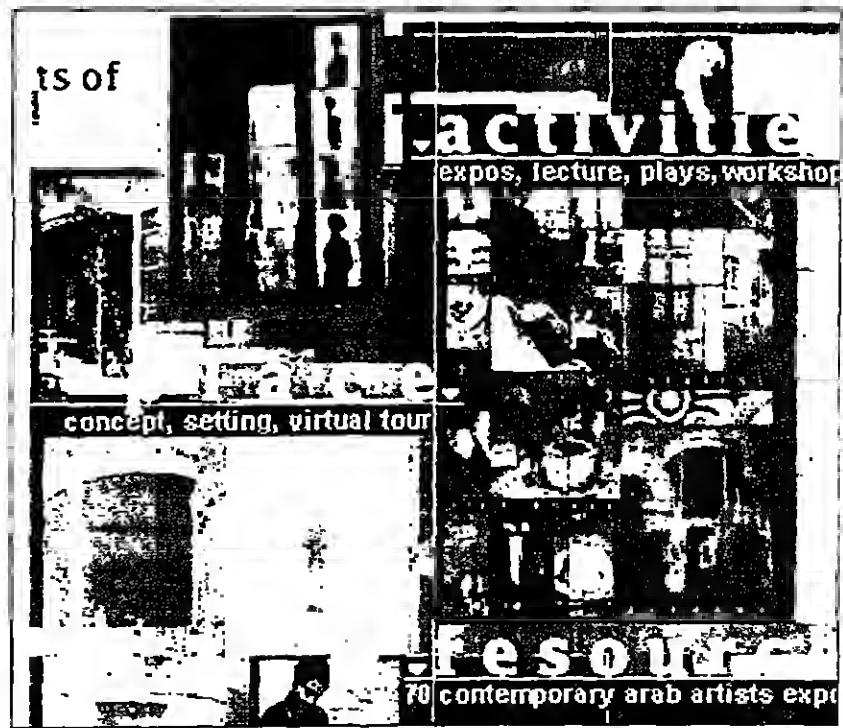
Education comes in many forms. Walk on the grounds amidst ancient ruins and connect with inner resources, spirituality and the wisdom of the ages, for within this complex exists not only the story of contemporary lives, careers, talents, aspirations, but also the story of the past. Juxtaposed in that historic setting are environ-

mental, site-specific sculptures. Near the lower entrance, confront Samia Taktak Zaru's work and contemplate its form and message.

Entertain yourself. Let the pleasure and excitement of color envelop you as you gaze at Nabil Shehadeh's compositions inside the galleries. Allow yourself to smile at the fantastic world of Rihana Bishara Ghassab. There is much to feel and see and experience in this exhibition.

The experience at the House of the Arts should not be missed. And what better time to go than during this Anniversary Exhibit which will be on view through January 28, 1999. Seventy-four artists are represented from Jordan, Sudan, Palestine, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt with works in sculpture, painting, graphics, ceramics and drawing. Jordan has the largest number of participants: nine of the 26 artists are women. Many of the works are for sale.

According to the Director, Ali Maher, the Darat Al Funun's mission is to "Nurture the visual arts in the Arab world by making works of Arab artists available to a wider audience." The Darat Al Funun offers a unique experience here in Jordan.



one obviously honed from judicious study and appreciation of major art centres worldwide — but it adds its own purpose and focus to these models, making it an educational, historical, architectural and aesthetic entity with the powerful potential to promote Jordan's cultural heritage.

The exhibition runs until January 28

The writer is an art museum director and curator who is presently in Jordan as a Fulbright Senior Scholar researching women and museums in the Middle East.

## When Islam first came to London

Islam in Britain: 1558-1685  
By Nabil Matar  
CUP £37.50 pp226

By William Dalrymple

THE BRITISH have always had a fairly ambiguous attitude to Islam. On one hand, this country has produced a stream of travellers and explorers who have written engagingly and sympathetically about "heart-beguiling Arab"; Doughty, Burton, Lawrence, Theodor and so on. On the other hand, Britain has never been short of xenophobes, and the howls of derision and amazement that greeted the news of Jennima Khans' conversion to Islam ("How Khan Jennima cope with Allah this?" screamed The Sun on its front page) represents a peculiarly British strain of headbanging hostility to Muslims which has been more or less constant since the time of the Crusades.

The origins of both British attitudes to Islam are charted in Nabil Matar's brilliant and gripping study, an astonishing compendium of ground-break-

ing research whose very title is a measure of quite how original and surprising this book is. I certainly did not know that there were Muslims in Britain during the time of the Tudors and Stuarts. Yet from the 16th century onwards, Britain was closely engaged with the Islamic World as the Ottoman Empire expanded westwards through central Europe and the Mediterranean, and Britain's trade network expanded eastwards to meet it.

Much of the initial contact took place against a background of naval skirmishes, where Muslim technological superiority at sea led to the capture and sinking of large numbers of British vessels. Between 1609 and 1616, it was reported that 466 English ships were attacked by Ottoman or Barbary galleys, and their crews led away in chains. By May 1620, there were more than 5,000 British captives in the city of Algiers and a further 1,500 in Sali, and frantic arrangements were being made in London to redeem them "lest they follow the example of others and turn Turk", i.e. convert to Islam.

By the 1620s, the Turkish naval presence was no longer confined to the Mediterranean and had extended its reach into the waters of the British Isles. In August 1625, "The Turks took out from the Church of 'Munigexa' in Mounts Bay Cornwall about 60 men, women and children, and carried them away captives"; while, in June 1670, a petition was presented to the king on behalf of "140 men from Stegney" who had been captured from "22 merchant ships" by the Algerians. What was more worrying still were reports that some of these raids were being led by Englishmen who had converted to Islam and "turned Turk". For example, in September 1645, seven ships "from Barbary" landed in Cornwall and were led inland "by some renegade of this country".

It was reports that large numbers of British captives were converting to Islam that really rattled the Stuart authorities. Worse still, while some of these conversions were forced, most were clearly not, and British travellers in the East regularly brought back tales of their companions who had "crossed

over" and were now prospering in Ottoman service.

Indeed, Brits were constantly popping up in the most unlikely places. One of the most powerful Ottoman eunuchs during the late 16th century, Hasan Aga, was the former Samson Rowley from Great Yarmouth, while in Algeria the "Morish King's Executioner" turned out to be a former butcher from Exeter called "Abdalloni" (Abd-es-Salam). When Charles II sent Captain Hamilton to ransom some Englishmen who had been enslaved on the Barbary Coast his mission was unsuccessful as they all refused to return. The men had all converted to Islam, risen in the ranks and were now "partaking of the prosperous Successes of the Turks", living in a style to which they could not possibly have aspired back home. The frustrated Captain Hamilton was forced to return empty handed: "They are tempted to forsake their God for the love of Turkish women," he wrote in his official report. "Such ladies are," he added, "generally very beautiful."

In a great many cases, the English-

men who converted to Islam were not slaves but free merchants or servants of the Crown who were attracted by what they saw. Soon after, trade with the Ottoman Empire began to flourish — and by the end of the 17th century trade with Turkey accounted for one quarter of all England's overseas commercial activity — Sir Thomas Shirely warned that "conversation with infidels doth much corrupt," and that the more time Englishmen spent in the lands of Islam, the closer they moved to adopting the manners of the Muslims. "Many wylde youths of all nations," he wrote, "as well English as others, in every 3 years that they stay in Turkey they loose one article of theyre faythe." Islam overpowered the English by its power of attraction, not by the sword; in 1680, even the British consul in Egypt, Benjamin Bishop, converted and promptly disappeared from public records.

All this, of course, went down badly at home, and the treacherous "renegade" soon became a stock character on the English stage, where jokes about circumcision and men who converted to Islam expecting hurems, and instead ended up as eunuchs, became the

Jacobean equivalent of the mother-in-law joke. It also caused a problem to the church authorities when former apostates began returning home in large numbers, some wishing readmission to the church, others apparently wishing to keep to their new faith. In 1637, the matter was the subject of a full-scale parliamentary debate, when Archbishop Laud presented to the house A Form of Penance and Reconciliation of a Renegade or Apostate from the Christian Religion to Turcism.

One of the most amusing sections of this remarkable and original book deals with the anxious debate that rocked the country in the mid-17th century as to whether the newly fashionable Oriental drink of coffee — "The Mahometan berry" — put the drinker under "the power of the Turkish spell," thus preparing the way for Englishmen to commit apostasy; indeed, a few took the view that coffee drinking was really part of a secret Turkish plot to destroy Christendom. Much of the debate, so it seems, revolved around whether coffee excited or depressed the libido. A petition published in Restoration London, purportedly prepared by "City-Wives," referred to the "inconveniences that accrue to

their SEX, from the Excessive Drinking of that Drying, and Enfeebling LIQUOR" that turned their husbands into "EUNUCHS."

Others disagreed: "Coffee is the general drink throughout Turkey, and those Eastern Regions, and yet no part of the world can boast more able or eager performers than those circumcised gentlemen," wrote one pamphleteer. "Coffee Collects and settles the Spirits, makes the erection more Vigorous, the Ejaculation more full, adds a spiritual essence to the Spermie, and renders it more firm and suitable to the Gusto of the woman, and proportionate to the ardours and expectation too, of the female Paramour."

So wholly unexpected and unlikely is most of the material in this book that one might take some of the text for a practical joke; as a feat of research alone this book is a small miracle. But it is also warmly and wittily written and, unusually for a heavyweight academic book, enormously readable and accessible. It is certainly the most surprising book I have read for many months.

— The Sunday Times







## Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

### Jordan boosts exports of vegetables and fruits by 13 per cent in 1998

**\*\* JORDANIAN EXPORTS** of vegetables and fruits increased by 13 per cent last year as the total rose by 48,000 tonnes, from 370,200 tonnes in 1997 to 418,500 tonnes in 1998, said Salem Lozi, the director general of the Agricultural Marketing Organisation (AMO). Lozi attributed the increase to the success in opening new markets such as the Omani market.

Lozi indicated that Oman started receiving the Jordanian exports directly noting that exports to that country reached 32,000 tonnes in 1998 compared to 2,000 tonnes and 200 tonnes during 1997 and 1996 respectively. The AMO chief said another reason for the rise in exports was the return of normal ties between Kuwait and Jordan. As a result, he added, Kuwait ranked second as it imported 100,000 of Jordanian produce, 20,000 tonnes more than in 1997.

The AMO chief pointed out that exports to Bahrain increased by 8,000 tonnes and to Qatar by 7,000 while exports to Europe rose by around 2,500 tonnes. He noted that sales to European countries do not exceed 8,000 tonnes which represent about 1.8 per cent of total exports.

Lozi attributed the low exports to European states to the high specifications required in the European markets and the stiff competition that faces Jordanian exports there. Moreover, he said, the difficulties in reaching the European markets and the high costs in this regard are additional factors contributing to the low volume of exports.

He explained that exports to Europe are usually conducted by air freight as Jordan is not located on the shores of the Mediterranean as Lebanon, Cyprus, Tunisia, Turkey or Israel. As such, the costs are high. Similarly, Lozi said, exports to eastern Europe face difficulties because the products have to be exported via refrigerated trucks which are not of high specifications to enable them to reach the market there easily.

Noting that exports to European markets usually take place during winter when weather conditions are difficult, Lozi said such climate restricts exporting via unqualified refrigerated trucks. He stressed that the Kingdom hopes to boost its exports of vegetables and fruits to the European markets especially after signing the partnership accord with the European Union and after taking into consideration all the problems that hinder such an increase in exports.

He mentioned in this regard improving the specifications and studying the needs of the European markets especially during the winter season. Lozi also emphasised that the AMO was servicing all levels of the private sector and that it is working with the private sector to open new markets.

Lozi said the AMO was conducting studies on all traditional and new market to detect new developments and changes in requirements. He expected exports to shoot up by another 13 per cent this year (Al Ra'i).

## Syrians do their banking in Lebanon

**CHTOURA, Lebanon (IR)** — The banks that line the litter-strewn road sheering across Lebanon's poverty-stricken Bekaa Valley make little sense until you reach the far side and see the sign announcing the border with Syria.

Any financial industry is always looking for customers in need of its services, and when it comes to banking Syria is a vacuum that Lebanon's banks are more than happy to fill by locating branches on its borders.

"It's not money laundering," said a Lebanese banker, speaking to others in the industry on condition that he was not identified. "It's commercial transactions because they don't have a banking system."

The volume of money leaving Syria, bypassing the official exchange laws, is impossible to ascertain. There are at least 10 bank branches around Chitoura alone, others

are near other border crossings to Syria.

Some Syrians prefer to deal with head offices in Beirut, while bankers say middlemen — who handle most transactions on behalf of the Syrian merchants generating the bulk of the cash — also carry funds to other countries without stopping in Lebanon.

Although most transactions are smaller, letters of credit are sometimes for \$500,000. Estimates of the amount of Syrian money held abroad range into the tens of billions of dollars.

"Billions of dollars of goods coming to Latakia arrive marked free of payment," said a banker, explaining that goods arriving at the Syrian port had been paid for without Syrian state authorisation through letters of credit issued abroad.

This Bekaa industry has been created to fill the void left by the decay of the Syrian banking system since it was

nationalised in 1963.

It now consists of a central bank overseeing six state banks. Of the six, including institutions aimed at industry and agriculture, the Commercial Bank is the only important one, holding 85 per cent of the sector balance sheet.

"The central bank was modern, even compared to Europe, 40 or 50 years ago. Now it's completely outdated," said a Western banking expert.

"By far it's the most under-developed banking system in the region. They're in the Soviet Union in 1989 — even less. The Soviet Union at least had well-trained staff in the Syrian system you don't even have that."

The Syrian government, which has been slowly breaking with the Soviet model that was popular when President Hafez Al Assad was a young officer, understands modern banks are necessary if its development hopes are to

succeed. "Unless you develop the sector it will hinder the development of the industrial, agricultural sectors and so on," Deputy Prime Minister Salim Yassin told Reuters, while cautioning that reforms must be done carefully.

"Needed reforms in the financial sector or units of the financial sector are taking place and it will continue," he said. "And I do hope at a faster rate than we have done so far."

A small project by the European Union under a 2.2 million ECU (\$2.6 million) grant is providing basic upgrading of the central bank, such as installing computers to better control the bank's activities.

A 25 million ECU project is under consideration that over an 18-month period starting in late 1999, would initiate much broader reform. "There is nothing to improve, it has to change," said a diplomat.

One expert estimated it

could take at least seven years to reform the financial sector without unexpected complications, emphasising that the Syrians are right to think it must be done methodically to avoid the distortions that helped create chaos in some emerging markets.

Staff, who now receive salaries of about \$100 a month, need to be trained and given new incentives. Basic equipment, such as computers to keep the central bank aware of activities in the banking sector, have to be installed.

There are no proper accounting standards, legal structures are antiquated. Obtaining loans is so difficult — and would not be done with the secrecy rigidly observed by Lebanese banks — that merchants pay 20 per cent interest rates in the Syrian souks in the centuries-old fashion. There is only one insurance company, also state-run.

### A.F.M. TRADE Saturday, 09-01-99

Company	Open	Close	Change
<b>BANKS</b>			
ARAB BK	217.000	217.000	0.00%
NTL BK	1.540	1.540	0.00%
BL OF JO	1.270	1.250	-1.57%
MIDDLE EAST BK	1.040	1.030	-0.96%
THE HOUSING BK	2.880	2.840	-1.39%
JO. KUWAIT BK	1.630	1.650	+1.23%
JO. GULF BK	0.700	0.700	0.00%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.700	1.680	-1.18%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.560	0.560	0.00%
<b>BANKS INDEX</b>	<b>284.410</b>	<b>point =</b>	<b>-0.19%</b>
<b>INSURANCE</b>			
GENERAL ARABIA INS	2.040	2.040	0.00%
AHLIA INS	1.110	1.080	-2.70%
<b>INSURANCE INDEX</b>	<b>126.370</b>	<b>point =</b>	<b>-0.23%</b>
<b>SERVICES</b>			
ELECTRIC POWER	1.720	1.760	+2.33%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.960	0.870	-9.38%
JO. INTL. TRADING CENT	0.270	0.270	0.00%
AL-RAY	6.550	5.400	-17.70%
AL-ZARQA FOR EDU	0.840	0.850	+1.19%
ARAB INTL. FOR INVS.	1.940	1.940	0.00%
UNIFIED LANO TRANS	1.160	1.160	0.00%
<b>SERVICES INDEX</b>	<b>111.450</b>	<b>point =</b>	<b>+0.22%</b>
<b>INDUSTRY</b>			
CEMENT	3.520	3.750	+6.53%
PHOSPHATE	1.770	1.730	-2.26%
ARAB POTASH	2.940	3.090	+5.10%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10.500	10.540	+0.38%
THE IND. COMB. & ASRUC	1.070	1.080	+0.93%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	2.810	2.840	+1.07%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.240	1.240	0.00%
DAR AL DAWA	5.420	5.400	-0.37%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.570	0.560	-1.75%
JO. STEEL	0.990	0.980	-1.01%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1.870	1.900	+1.60%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.400	0.400	0.00%
PETRO-CHEMICAL	0.360	0.340	-5.56%
ROCKWOOL	0.350	0.340	-2.86%
INTL. CABLE	0.650	0.650	0.00%
SULPHO-CHEMICALS	0.380	0.380	0.00%
ARAB CENTER FOR PHAR	1.280	1.260	-1.56%
TEL-ZAY	1.370	1.370	0.00%
UNIVERSAL MOOERN IND	0.660	0.670	+1.52%
INTL. ALUMINIUM	0.720	0.700	-2.78%
<b>INDUSTRY INDEX</b>	<b>84.850</b>	<b>point =</b>	<b>+2.35%</b>

## HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR JANUARY, SUNDAY 10, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) There are opportunities to party, but don't go into debt. On the other hand, don't let a lack of money stop you. Money is out there; you just need to figure out how to get it into your account before you find a way to spend it. Today, that's your challenge. Figure out how to make ends meet, so you can play.

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) You and your partner have important things to discuss today. Find a private place where you can do that without fear of interruption. Once you get all the important stuff worked out, you can just relax. Some cuddling could even occur, so you'd better pack in a few necessities, like champagne, for example.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) Something you want to accomplish today could take more work than you thought. No problem, if you and your sweetheart pitch in together. Working together could move your relationship from frivolous to substantive. You'll certainly gain stature in your friend's eyes as you prove you're not just talk.

**CANCER:** (June 22 to July 21) Things should be just about the way you want them, so celebrate. You've worked hard and you need to give yourself a bonus. Don't go into debt, though, or you'll run into trouble from your mate. Don't let a silly argument interrupt your romantic plans for the evening, either. A casual remark isn't meant to hurt your feelings, don't let it.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) You're in the spotlight today. People want to know what you're up to. You may have to answer some tough questions, but that's OK. It's good practice. You'll run into this sort of situation more and more as you climb the ladder to success. Meanwhile, don't overlook your partner's needs. Take flowers for no reason, and you'll discover what the reason is.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) Stop, look and listen today. Consider what needs to be done, and how you're going to do it. Also, be tuned in to what other people around you are doing. That's a trick you can get better at with practice. Invidia is partly just paying attention to details, and today you'll be excellent at that.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) Today, make service your primary motivation. Somebody needs your attention, and you want to give it. Be watching for whatever has to be done to make things run smoothly. Although you're not done to make things run smoothly, that could be a consequence of your actions. Focus on providing for others and you'll be provided for as well.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) One of your plans for home or family looks like its running into a roadblock. That's partially because you won't do what somebody else wants you to do. That's OK. The other person might actually benefit from your sticking to your guns. State your position in a warm, loving way, and you're more apt to get a warm, loving response.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) Oops! Looks like you put something off long enough. It might be a task a loved one wanted you to do, in which case you'll be hearing about it soon. The whole thing became so complicated that you left it in a pile and hoped nobody would notice. Well, now you're going to have to start producing results.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) The advice you get today might be a little more intrusive than you'd like. You think of yourself as the Lone Ranger, but other people are involved in what you do, and sometimes they have opinions about it. Cut them some slack, especially if their advice is appropriate. Don't snap at somebody who speaks out of turn if it's something you need to hear.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) Looks like somebody you love is trying to order you around today. If you can keep remembering the love, it won't be so bad. It might even be fun. The other person has some kind of benefit in mind for you. In other words, it's for your own good. So if you can just go along with the programme, you'll be better off.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) This is a great day to go to the lake, or sailing, or anything you can do near water. You always do better when you've got water around, especially now. If you can go with friends, that would be perfect. There are tensions in the air, but if you can make that connection with the water, everything smoothes out for all concerned.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz.

## Dollar decline against yen no immediate boon to U.S.

(Continued from page 8)

For U.S. analyst David Gilmore of Foreign Exchange Analytics, the rise in the yen "is the worst thing that could happen to the Japanese economy, given that its only strength in the private sector is from exports."

"At this stage of the game there's probably a greater interest (in the United States) in having a stronger Japan and a stronger Asia than in addressing the widening trade deficit with Japan," according to Gilmore.

At Salomon Smith Barney, economist Kenneth Schoenholtz has predicted that the current surge in the yen will be short-lived.

"Fundamentals suggest that the yen will be the weakest industrial currency in 1999, reflecting the continued plunge of the Japanese economy and the deterioration of the financial system," he wrote in a recent report.

He saw the Japanese currency sliding back to 140 to the dollar later this year.

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# Australians upset Swedes to clinch Hopman Cup

PERTH (AFP) — Australia's newest tennis sensation, 15-year-old schoolgirl Jelena Dokic, celebrated winning AS\$100,000 (\$62,500) as she helped her country power to victory over Sweden in Saturday's Hopman Cup final here.

Dokic and her partner, Mark Philippoussis, wore down a gallant Sweden to snatch the two singles clashes and win the mixed teams tournament for the first time.

At Burswood Dome, Dokic whipped Asa Carlsson and Philippoussis beat Jonas Bjorkman. Dokic overcame Carlsson 6-2, 7-6 (10/8) before Philippoussis beat Bjorkman 6-3, 7-6 (8/6).

In the dead mixed doubles, played as a pro-set, the Swedes gained a small consolation by winning 8-6, leaving Australia 2-1 winners of the showdown. The Australians shared winnings of AS\$200,000.

"It has been a great week for me," said Dokic. "And this is the greatest day of my life. It could not have been better. I have never won something this big before. We were not expected to win — we weren't even seeded."

"This gives me great confidence for the Australian Open, later this month. This win hasn't really sunk in yet. It is just huge for me."

Asked how she would spend her winnings, Dokic said: "I will go shopping." Philippoussis said: "At



Jelena Dokic and Mark Philippoussis of Australia hold up the Hopman Cup after their win over Asa Carlsson and Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden in Perth. Australia won both of their singles to take the final (AFP photo)

the start of the week I would have laughed at anyone who suggested we would be the winners."

Dokic said she was not happy with restrictions imposed by the International Tennis Federation on the number of tournaments in which players under 17 can compete. The rules are designed to protect youngsters from burnout.

Saying she could compete in only six more tournaments before she turns 16 in April, and then in only 10 between her 16th and 17th birthdays, she added: "It's not much at all — and it's very tough to get my ranking down."

"But I guess that's just

the way the rules are — and it's going to be very tough." A disappointed Carlsson said: "Jelena is not like a 15-year-old, she is much stronger. She has maturity and is more like an 18 or 19-year-old. She plays very positive strokes."

"I have seen a few stars coming up and they all have the same attitude. It could be the start of a big career," Dokic maintained the devastating form which has made her a national pin-up inside the past week.

Already the world number one junior, but ranked a lowly 341st in senior ranks, Dokic has now beaten three established international seniors over four days.

Her earlier victims were Spain's world number four Arantxa Sanchez Vicario and Sandrine Testud of France, ranked 14th.

Dokic said Carlsson had fought strongly in the second set of the final.

"She really lifted her game and I had to fight," she said.

Dokic said she was pleased she had been able to improve her game after crashing to South Africa's Amanda Coetzer at the start of the tournament.

"I have certainly played much better in my last three matches," she said. "I have gone out thinking: 'I have nothing to lose — go for it.'"

## Automatic line system to be reviewed

PERTH (AFP) — An automatic electronic line system which broke down in the Hopman Cup women's singles final is to be reviewed. tournament director Paul McNamee said here Saturday.

"It was very disappointing the system broke down," he said. Play was held up briefly during the crucial clash between Australia's Jelena Dokic and Asa Carlsson, of Sweden while the system was adjusted.

"There were some problems this week," McNamee said.

Before the system was used again, it would be necessary to be certain the problems would not be repeated, he said.

The system has been used at the Hopman Cup several times.

Iron filings impregnated in balls electronically activate a court-side buzzer when the ball passes over a line, dispensing with the need for line judges.

## Hewitt, Enqvist reach Australian hardcourt final

ADELAIDE (AFP) — Australian teenager Lleyton Hewitt charged into the final of the Australian Men's Hardcourt Tennis Championship with an emphatic victory over compatriot Jason Stoltenberg here Saturday.

The 17-year-old from Adelaide will defend his title against Swedish second seed Thomas Enqvist in Sunday's final.

Hewitt stretched his unbeaten run in his home tournament to nine matches with a 6-1, 6-3 win over the experienced Davis Cup team member Stoltenberg.

Hewitt, who beat Andre Agassi and Jonas Bjorkman on the way to winning last year's title here, outplayed Stoltenberg, attacking every shot and breaking his serve three times in the first set and once in the second.

Enqvist put last year's injury-plagued season behind him to earn a berth in the final by eliminating Australian Scott Draper in the day's other semi-final.

Enqvist, who took a break for three months last year after undergoing ankle surgery, comprehensively outscored Draper, delivering three of his 12 aces in his final service game to claim the match 6-3, 7-5.

Draper was more of a match in the second set, but Enqvist kept his cool in the hot windy conditions at Memorial Drive, breaking in the 11th game and then claiming the match in the next.

Enqvist said he felt in control in the first set, but was lucky in the second set when Draper began to perform.



Steffi Graf gestures as she expresses her displeasure with a call in her match at the SuperPower Challenge Cup tennis tournament in Hong Kong (AFP photo)

## Frenchwoman takes Auckland tennis title

AUCKLAND (AFP) — Third seed Julie Halard-Decugis of France stormed to victory in the final of ASB Classic tennis tournament here Saturday when she beat defending champion and top seed Dominique Van Roost to straight sets 6-4, 6-1.

Van Roost failed to counter the ferocity of Halard-Decugis' forehand, which was too strong for the Belgian. The victory was just reward for Halard-Decugis, who has been to Auckland every year since 1994, with the exception of 1997 when she was injured.

It was also her best performance in the tournament. Her previous best had been a semi-final appearance in the 1994 event. Halard-Decugis broke Van Roost's serve in the first game of a tight first set, which then went with serve.

In the second set, Van Roost withered at the onslaught with Halard-Decugis breaking serve in the third, fifth and seventh games to take the crown. She wrapped up her win when Van Roost double-faulted a 30-40 down in the seventh game of the second set. "I think I played great today and I am very pleased," Halard-Decugis said.

Van Roost was gracious in defeat, saying her opponent was just too good on the day. "Julie played wonderfully today, she didn't make a mistake," Van Roost said. Both players now head to Australia as they continue their preparations for the Australian Open, which starts on January 18.

## SPORTS IN BRIEF

### French star likely to miss Australian Open

PERTH (AFP) — French tennis star Nicolas Escude is unlikely to take part in the Australian Open championships starting January 18 following the death of his father, tournament director Paul McNamee said here Saturday. "It is not official, but extremely doubtful he will take part," said McNamee. Escude, who reached the semi-final of the Australian Open last year, has returned from Noumea to France to be with his family.

### Graf wants to team up with McEnroe

HONG KONG (AFP) — German tennis ace Steffi Graf has said she would like to team up with American legend John McEnroe for an assault on this year's Wimbledon mixed doubles crown — but he has to ask first. Graf, who is taking part in an exhibition event here, said late Friday she was still waiting to hear from the retired American veteran, who has reportedly said he wants to partner the 29-year-old at Wimbledon. "He still hasn't asked me," Graf told reporters. When asked for her views on McEnroe's comments, "Sure, I would like to do it — but I wish he would ask me first," added the winner of 21 Grand Slam events.

## Schnyder in top 10 after beating Pierce

GOLD COAST (AFP) — Switzerland's Patty Schnyder launched 1999 with a three-set victory over top seed Mary Pierce in the \$170,000 Australian Women's Hardcourt Tennis Championship final here Saturday.

Second seed Schnyder wore down Pierce 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-2 to secure her sixth WTA title and her first win over her French opponent at the fourth attempt.

The win over the 1995 Australian Open winner also catapulted the 20-year-old left-hander from world No.11 to a career high of eight.

Schnyder, who slammed down 11 aces, said the win over the World No.7 represented a breakthrough.

"I'm going to be number eight on Monday and I'm just so happy that everything has worked out so nicely for me," Schnyder said.

"It was a big step for me to win against Mary because she was always one of the players I really hated playing."

Schnyder pinpointed her early break in the second set as a turning point in the match.

"It was hard because I was playing really good tennis and it was only the serves I couldn't return so I just kept on and on so in the end I got a break," she said.

Pierce, 23, appeared to be the more consistent player in the first set and made the break in the seventh game when a Schnyder forehand went long.



Mary Pierce

However, Schnyder, aided by a dubious line call, broke straight back to level.

In the 12th game Pierce saved three set points to force a tie-break in which Schnyder prevailed 7-5.

By the third set Pierce's power game started disintegrating and Schnyder broke twice to win the match.

Pierce said she had made the match difficult for herself.

"I have to give Patty a lot of credit. She's a tough opponent and she played great today and I think she deserved to win," Pierce said. "I had my opportunities

and I let them slip away too many times."

"I missed a lot of easy shots and I wasn't aggressive enough."

While Schnyder will play in next week's Sydney international, Pierce will take a week off to train in Melbourne before the January 18 Australian Open.

## Stomach bug forces Graf out of Hong Kong event

HONG KONG (AFP) — German tennis ace Steffi Graf's Australian Open preparations suffered a jolt Saturday when she was forced to pull out of an exhibition event here with suspected gastric influenza.

Graf was level at 2-2 against America's Venus Williams in the final of the SuperPower Challenge Cup when she withdrew complaining of stomach pains.

The 29-year-old, due to fly out later Saturday to play in the Sydney International tournament which starts Sunday, was not immediately available for comment. Tournament director

Brian Canton told reporters: "Steffi said she was feeling unwell about 20 minutes before the final. She tried to play but was unable to carry on and she thinks it might be gastric flu."



Venus Williams shows off the trophy after winning the SuperPower Challenge Cup in Hong Kong. Williams took the trophy after Steffi Graf retired in the first set with a stomach ache. Williams went on to play an exhibition match against Anna Kournikova, defeating her 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 (AFP photo)

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## Syria welcomes Japan's Middle East peace efforts

DAMASCUS (R) — Syria on Saturday welcomed Japan's efforts to push forward stalled Middle East peace talks.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al Sharaa was speaking after talks with his Japanese counterpart.

Masahiko Kōmura on how to revive Syrian-Israeli peace talks which broke off in early 1996.

Kōmura also had a meeting with Syrian President Hafez Al Assad, also attended by Sharaa. "We highly appreciate the Japanese role in the peace process and its effective participation in the United Nations peacekeeping force [separating Israeli and Syrian troops] in the Golan," Sharaa said.

"This participation reflects Japan's desire to effectively be involved in the Middle East peace process. We warmly welcome this participation

because Japan's position supports implementation of U.N. resolutions, especially the land-for-peace principle," he added.

Kōmura, visiting Damascus as part of a regional tour that is also due to take him to Israel, told Reuters he would stress during talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the importance of resuming the Syrian-Israeli talks.

"My talks with President Assad were very good. The president expressed support for the Japanese role and I am happy to be able to help the concerned parties and to support the peace process," the Japanese minister said.

Kōmura, who already visited Egypt and Lebanon, left for Jordan at the end of his talks in Damascus. He will also visit the Palestinian self-rule areas, officials said.

Tokyo is one of the major aid donors to the Middle East, especially to the Palestinian National Authority.

Japan has given Syria over \$1.6 billion in soft loans and grants during the last few years to contribute to the financing of a number of development projects, especially the construction of power stations.

Japanese troops are participating in the 1,050-strong U.N. Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) that is stationed in the Golan area between Northeast Israel and Southwest Syria.

UNDOF comprises troops from Austria, Canada, Poland and Slovakia in addition to Japan.

## Kuwait MPs call for measures to block Israel links

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait's parliament called on the government on Saturday to block any normalisation of ties with Israel in view of reports that a Kuwaiti journalist had visited the Jewish state.

A statement sent to Reuters said members of parliament had urged the government to "desist from anything which could be considered as normalisation with the Zionist entity [Israel] to protect Kuwait's honour."

"Parliament asked the government to present a report on legal steps taken against this citizen [who visited Israel]. Parliament has also banned him from entering parliament in his capacity as a journalist," the statement added.

Media sources said a local daily had sent a reporter to Israel where he conducted a series of interviews with several political leaders including Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu and President Ezer Weizman.

The interviews have not been published so far. Pro-Western Kuwait has provided the U.S.-led Middle East peace process with both political and financial backing despite its tense ties with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Parliament often attacks Israel and in November strongly criticised the Wye River peace accord between Israel and the Palestinians — which the Kuwaiti government has welcomed.

Kuwait, like most of the other conservative Gulf Arab states, is not willing to consider normalisation with Israel in the absence of a comprehensive Middle East peace settlement, including the status of Jerusalem and Israel's unconditional withdrawal from the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon.

## Lebanese police prevent removal of public documents

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese police have acted to prevent the removal of documents from public sector offices whose top management have recently been replaced, the police said Saturday.

In one operation, three female employees of an organisation which has been abolished as part of a move to clean up public affairs, were stopped as they tried to leave their offices with bags full of papers.

Police seized the documents but did not detain the employees of Ogero, the office responsible for maintaining the telephone network.

Documents were also seized from staff of the Lebanese Electricity Office as they tried to remove them. The employees were released but an investigation is under way, police said.

On Thursday the government adopted a series of measures to put an end to "waste and corruption" in the public sector.

Nineteen top officials and board chairmen of public sector offices, most of them regarded as close associates of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, were sacked or removed from office pending transfer.

Hariri strongly attacked the measures on Friday, saying they were dictated by a "spirit of political vengeance" and "indicated a lack of seriousness" in the conduct of public affairs.



Palestinians participate on Saturday in a march in the West Bank town of Jenin to mark the 34th anniversary of the first operation by the PLO's leading military faction, Fatah. Some 3,000 demonstrators marched through the streets of the Palestinian-ruled town (AFP photo)

## Khatami vows to end dissident murders

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian President Mohammad Khatami pledged on Saturday to put an end to the political violence in the country which has claimed the lives of at least four liberal dissidents in the past two months.

"I will make every effort to find the cause of the recent murders, whether they have their roots at home or abroad," he said at a public meeting to mark the death of Imam Ali, the son-in-law of Prophet Mohammad and a figure revered by Shiite Muslims.

"This is a stain of disgrace that must be eradicated. We will remove any corrupt cell in the body of the country," he said.

"These hateful murders are taking place at a time when the regime has put difficult conditions behind it and is moving toward establishing the rule of law," he said, appealing for the public to help to establish law and order.

"The advocates of violence do not want to see a stable Iran," he also praised the efforts of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who on Friday ordered a further investigation into the murders.

Iran's formidable intelligence ministry made the extraordinary admission earlier this week that rogue intelligence agents were involved in the stabbing to death of opposition nationalist leader Daryush

Foruhar and his wife, Parvaneh, on Nov. 22.

"Ill-minded, irresponsible colleagues" also carried out the kidnapping and murder of at least two secular writers — Mohammad Mokhtari and Mohammad Pouyandeh — in early December, it said, adding that the responsible agents had been arrested.

Another writer, Majid Sharif, was found dead in mysterious circumstances around the same time but the authorities said he had died of a heart attack.

The state news agency IRNA also mentioned Friday, for the first time, the name of Piruz Davani, a writer-translator who went missing several months ago, saying that

"according to unofficial reports" he was among those killed.

The intelligence ministry said that the rogue agents had been working for a foreign country, and Khamenei on Friday repeated the charge.

"This matter is not finished. I have difficulty believing that these murders have taken place without a foreign scenario," he said.

On Tuesday Ali Razini, head of Tehran province's justice department, survived an assassination attempt.

Razini, who is reportedly close to hardline religious conservatives in the Iranian regime, was slightly wounded in the leg, abdomen and chest.

## Regent-Kōmura talks focus on peace process, Iraq and bilateral ties

(Continued from page 1)

Okada reiterated Japan's political and financial support to the Palestinian National Authority, and said Tokyo fully recognises the Palestinians' right to self-determination, including their right to declare an independent state.

But he urged the PNA to refrain from unilaterally declaring an independent state on May 4, as Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has said on various occasions.

"We will ask the Palestinians to be a bit more careful, because, although we agree in principle that this is their right, the timing [of the declaration of independence] could be counterproductive," Okada said.

An immediate result of Kōmura's high-level talks in the Kingdom was his announcement of Japan's continued commitment to supporting Jordan financially.

Jordan and Japan signed the extension of a soft loan to Jordan for a \$63 million tourism development project expected to increase foreign currency earnings, create jobs, and stimulate domestic and regional economies.

An exchange of notes for the soft loan was signed by Kōmura and Planning Minister Nabil Ammari.

Jordan is the largest recipient of Japan's official development assistance loans per capita among developing countries worldwide, with Tokyo's contributions to the Kingdom's economic development totalling \$82 million in 1998.

Earlier, Prince Hassan accompanied Kōmura on a visit of the Himein refugee camp, northeast of Amman, to familiarise him with the needs of the camp residents and the

importance to ensure financial support to UNRWA.

The two, accompanied by UNRWA Commissioner General Peter Hansen, were cheered by crowds gathered to greet them after the break of the Ramadan fast in yesterday's light rain.

Prince Hassan and Kōmura, accompanied by delegations of officials and media, stopped to talk to camp residents outside a barber shop, where they were welcomed with tea and traditional Arabic coffee.

After Prince Hassan and Kōmura visited one of the camp's modest homes, the large motorcade slowly made its way through the narrow and dark streets of the camp.

Jordan, home to more than 1.3 million Palestinian refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, has struggled bravely to provide all its citizens with health services, education, and other infrastructure.

Prince Hassan earlier welcomed the Japanese official during an iftar banquet hosted by Lower House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali and attended by deputies and Cabinet members.

Prince Hassan spoke about his trip to London on Friday to meet His Majesty King Hussein, and said he told the King that he was meeting with the Japanese foreign minister to discuss issues of mutual concern and bilateral cooperation.

Prince Hassan expressed his delight at his meeting with the King, who enquired about the Jordanian people and discussed various regional issues. The Crown Prince said he discussed with the King national economic issues, such as foreign aid, stability and production.

## Dentist admits he molested young patients

TULSA (AP) — A dentist accused of blindfolding and then photographing dozens of his young female patients performing sex acts on him has admitted molesting five girls.

Donald C. Johnson pleaded guilty Friday to five counts of lewd molestation in exchange for a recommendation from prosecutors that he receive a 70-year prison sentence. Sex abuse charges that carried possible life terms were dropped.

Johnson, 48, spent a week as a fugitive after employees at his Tulsa dental office discovered a box full of photographs of blindfolded girls, mostly between the ages of 8 to 16. They appeared to be anaesthetised while performing oral sex on a man.

Authorities identified the man as Johnson based on a distinctive ring appearing in the photos.

District Attorney Tim Harris said the families of the victims support the plea bargain, in part to spare the girls from having to testify.

"It serves the community. It serves the victims. It serves the families," Harris said. "We believe he'll be in there until he's in his 70s."

Associate District Judge Bill Beasley said he would follow the recommendation and sentence Johnson to 70 years on Feb. 16.

Robert Durbin, Johnson's lawyer, said his client wanted to protect the identity of the victims and avoid "revictimizing them."

## Dream of marriage dies for Greek-Italian couple

PATRAS, Greece (AP) — Luck was not with Angeliki and Luigi.

The Greek woman who fell in love with Luigi Sura during World War II and was reunited with him 56 years later died Saturday in this southern port city, two weeks before they were to be married.

Angeliki Stratigou met Sura when she was 23 in August 1941 after he arrived in the city with the Italian occupation troops.

Sura promised to marry his Greek sweetheart after the war. But about a year later, his regiment was posted abroad and Sura was forced to leave Patras. When the war was over, he wrote to Ms. Stratigou.

She never received the letter. Her aunt, with whom she was living, disapproved of the affair between her niece and an

enemy soldier, and ripped up all correspondence from Italy. After more than three years without any reply to his steady stream of letters to Patras, Sura stopped writing. He married soon afterwards, and had a son.

But when his wife died in 1996, Sura began searching for Ms. Stratigou. He wrote to the mayor of Patras, who, with the help of a journalist, managed to locate her, living in another part of the city.

She had never married. The two were reunited on Valentine's Day last year.

Sura, 77, proposed marriage and Ms. Stratigou, 79, accepted. Their wedding date was set for Dec. 22 last year and delayed for a month when he was briefly hospitalised in Italy. Then had planned to share their time between Greece and Italy.

## Blair warns Iraq response will be 'swift and immediate'

(Continued from page 1)

He vowed that British forces "will remain so long as Saddam remains a threat to his neighbourhood, to the region... He only understands the language of diplomacy if it's backed up by the threat of force."

"We have always said that we are perfectly happy to have a diplomatic solution to this... But we remain ready and willing to act if he poses a threat to the region again," Blair said.

An Iraqi MP, meanwhile, slammed Blair's visit to

Kuwait as little more than a bid to collect money to pay for Operation Desert Fox, the four day campaign of air and missile strikes against Iraq last month.

"His visit is aimed at encouraging the Kuwaitis to speedily pay the bill for the U.S.-British aggression" against Iraq, Saad Kassam Hamoudi told AFP in Baghdad.

"It is deplorable that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia always serve their masters by financing unjustified aggressions against a brother country," the MP said.

The United States, meanwhile, is poised to unleash a bombing campaign of up to three weeks if Iraq threatens its neighbours, or shoots down a U.S. or British plane patrolling the no-fly zones, the Knight Ridder/Tribune News Service reported, citing U.S. officials.

Blair's visit comes hot on the heels of a series of clashes between U.S. and British aircraft patrolling the two no-fly zones and Iraqi ground troops and jets.

On Thursday, a U.S. F-16 fighter fired a radar-seeking missile at a mobile Iraqi sur-

face-to-air missile launcher after being illuminated by radar in the northern no-fly zone Northwest of the city of Mosul.

It was the latest in a string of incidents in exclusion zones that cover almost 60 per cent of Iraqi airspace.

The no-fly zones, imposed after the 1991 Gulf War to protect Iraq's Kurdish and Shiite communities, extend north of the 36th parallel and up to the 33rd parallel in the south, reaching the outskirts of Baghdad.

The southern zone is patrolled by Allied aircraft

based in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

The 12 RAF Tornados also flew 28 missions against Iraqi targets over the four-day U.S.-British air campaign in December, dubbed Operation Desert Fox.

On Friday, Britain said it had mobilised an aircraft carrier to the Gulf as part of London's efforts to maintain the pressure on Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

The Invincible, with a complement of Sea Harrier jump-jets and Sea King helicopters, will join British forces already deployed in the region.

## Iraq MPs call for scrapping of border with Kuwait

(Continued from page 1)

And some MPs slammed the United States and Britain and the leadership of countries who participated in the "aggression," a reference to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

The calls came as Baghdad vowed to continue the conflict with the United States and Britain over its defiance of "no-

fly" zones patrolled by the Western allies in southern and northern Iraq.

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U.S. defence officials said this week that Iraqi aircraft

have penetrated the zones almost every day since Dec. 23. The Pentagon has recorded at least 40 violations.

Iraqi missile launchers within the zones have fired around 20 missiles at the Allied planes, the officials said.

Iraq has vowed to step up its challenge to the zones, which it condemns as illegal and a violation of its sovereignty.

## Dutchman rams car into police station

HILVERSUM (AFP) — A man seeking help for his psychiatric problems drove his car at full speed into a police station here, police said Friday. The man, aged 32, whose identity was not revealed, was arrested for causing material damage to the station. But police would not say whether he would receive psychiatric treatment. The Telegraaf newspaper said the man had gone to a psychiatric centre on Thursday seeking treatment but was turned away. Hospital officials told him he could not be admitted till next week, the paper added.

## Company offers voice mail boxes to homeless

CHICAGO (R) — Homeless people living in shelters across the United States will have access to voice mail boxes under a new program developed by a cellular service provider to enable prospective employers, landlords and caseworkers can contact them. "Having to give a shelter number to a prospective employer or landlord as a point of contact can hurt the person's chance of improving his or her living conditions," Chicago-based U.S. Cellular Corp. said. "Providing homeless people with cellular voice mail boxes is the very best way to help a person get off the street and into a job," said Michael Stoops of Washington-based National Coalition for the Homeless.

## City to scrap draconian centres for drunks

MOSCOW (R) — American relic of Soviet life, the "drinking-out" centres where drunks can be forced to spend the night, looks set to become a thing of the past in the city of Saratov, Interfax news agency said on Thursday.

Inhabited Russians "found wandering the streets of sleeping rough have long been a risk of being picked up by police and bundled into one of the centres, where a cold shower and a bed often await them. The police are sometimes accused by victims of being too brutal and dispatching them to the centres without just cause. Interfax said the reform-minded regional governor, Dmitry Ayatskiy, had signed an order requiring the closure of Saratov's "drinking-out" centres.

## Lebanese family unveils mummified hand

AJALTOUN (R) — A mummified hand of a man, believed to be a prominent Lebanese family has unveiled another example of the brutal Egyptian relics. "My great uncle Shayban brought me from Egypt after he finished studying medicine there in 1867," said Shawki Khazim. He opened a cedar-wood box containing a mummified hand of a woman with two fingers missing. Last month, an auctioneer in Florida failed to sell a left hand of a 4,000-year-old Egyptian princess after he said a \$300,000 bid fell short of the reserve price of \$500,000.

## Man-made fires linked to extinction of animals

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Fires set by the Aborigines caused the extinction of 50,000 years of 85 per cent of all animals in the continent, U.S. researchers said in a report published by Science magazine. Scientists from the University of Colorado at Boulder reached their conclusion by studying the fossil record of the continent.

The report, published in the journal Science, said that the Aborigines, who lived in Australia for thousands of years, set fires to clear the land for hunting and to create smoke screens to protect themselves from the heat of the sun.

The report also said that the Aborigines set fires to clear the land for hunting and to create smoke screens to protect themselves from the heat of the sun.

## Senator calls impeachment pile of dung

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A senator called the impeachment of President Bill Clinton a "pile of dung" on Saturday.

Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa said the impeachment was a "pile of dung" and that he would not support it.

Harkin said he was "sick and tired" of the impeachment and that he would not support it.

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Strikes mistake

Volume 24 Nutr

Centre-left PDP wins Nigerian state elections

More than 80 massacred in Colombia

Kuwait journalist: Israel visit 'irresponsible'

DNA tests end rumours Clinton fathered child

WASHINGTON (AFP) — DNA tests have proved US President Bill Clinton is not the father of a 10-year-old girl.

The Washington Post reported that the DNA tests, which were ordered by the girl's mother, showed that Clinton was not the father.

The report also said that the girl's mother, who is a 10-year-old girl, had been living with Clinton for several years.

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